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The Impact of Non-Standard Working Practices on the Accountancy and  
Architecture Professions

Alison Herrington

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2004



## **Abstract**

This thesis explores professional work and professional career development from the perspective of those working non-standard hours. It considers the various forms of non-standard working practices current within the professional labour market and examines how the working identities of professionals are constructed and how non-standard working practices impact on a professional's plans for their career development. Drawing on empirical research, involving questionnaire surveys of, and face to face interviews with, accountants and architects in the UK, the thesis details the strategies adopted by a growing number of professionals in order to meet their home and work commitments. The thesis offers a further consideration of theories of non-standard working within the professions, examining theories of time deviance within the professional labour market. It develops and expands existing theories of professional development by exploring the development of the professional project from within professions as well as between professional groups.

The study concludes from its exploration of data about professionals at different stages of their careers, that the 'traditional' notion, that a professional career is necessarily full time, involving long hours and high workplace visibility, is changing. The thesis argues that a better understanding of professional identity needs to be developed, taking into account the multi-faceted nature of contemporary working lives. It concludes that, until within the professions, recognition is given, to changing working practices, those working non-standard hours will continue both to be undervalued and to have their professional identities challenged and undermined.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abbreviations**

Architects for Change (AFC)

Architects Registration Board (ARB)

Architecture UK (ARCUK)

Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

Association of Taxation Technicians (ATT)

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)

Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA)

Computer Aided Design (CAD)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Fellow of Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA)

Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (FCIMA)

Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

## Introduction

The main aim of this study has been to provide further examination of the role of non-standard working practices within the labour market. In particular, I was interested in the impact non-standard working practices were having on members of the professional labour market. My focus was on the 'strategies' adopted by those looking to balance their home and work commitments, and on how such strategies are shaped by considerations about career development, or conversely, impact on career progression. To address this aim, I selected two professions, accountancy and architecture, as case studies for the research. Both professions have similar periods of training, have prominent professional bodies and clear professional career progression.

This study builds on, and develops, existing bodies of literature, both on non-standard working and on the development of the professions (Crompton et al, 1997, 1998, Larson, 1977, Epstein et al, 1999, 2001). It presents detailed findings from a survey and follow-up interviews with a sample of accountants and architects, and draws some theoretical conclusions about the nature of the professional labour market, the development of professionals' careers, and the ways in which non-standard working is practised within the two professions. The thesis offers a further consideration of theories of non-standard working within the professions, examining notions of time deviance within the professional labour market. The analysis has attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are the various forms of working practice adopted by architects and accountants surveyed within this research?
- What strategies have been adopted to balance the different demands of home and work?
- What impact, if any, has the adoption of non-standard working practices had on professionals' career development, and in which ways, if any, has this impact occurred?
- How does the formation and structure of the professional groups impact on professions' abilities to change their working practices?

- What role does the market play in the development of non-standard working practices, both within the labour market as a whole, and more specifically, within professional labour markets?
- What are the implications of a movement towards greater labour market flexibility for the future development of the professions?

These research questions were addressed through: a detailed literature review, a number of in-depth gatekeeper interviews; questionnaire surveys of accountants and architects and in-depth follow-up interviews. The questionnaire surveys were sent to accountancy and architecture practices across Great Britain, as well as to public sector professional departments, and the in-depth interviews were held with a subset of the questionnaire respondents. Respondents included those with non-standard working practices as well as those considering changes to their 'standard' working patterns. Respondents were both male and female and aged between 25 and 55 and were at a number of different life stages. They included some who had recently qualified, some in the early stages of family formation, some looking for a return to work after maternity leave, and some in the throes of making changes to their working lives.

## **Background to the research**

Over the last fifteen years, non-standard working patterns and opportunities for family friendly working practices have become more common themes in strands of academic research and evaluation. In particular, the research has looked at how workers, across all sectors, have attempted to balance their home and work commitments (Crompton et al, Epstein et al, Yeandle et al, op cit). Consideration has been given to the strategies adopted by such workers, to the provision made by employers and to possible areas for future state support and policy development. Alongside these strands of research, legislative changes have been made, both at a European and national level, to employment law and regulation, which have aimed to facilitate better working conditions for those who have non-standard working patterns or non-standard employment contracts.

This thesis focuses on one key group within the labour market, professional workers, and specifically, professionals adopting non-standard working practices. The thesis further explores and develops an area of work which I had first examined at undergraduate level, and subsequently at postgraduate level. My undergraduate study of the effects of unemployment on local communities, had made me aware of the impact that the casualisation of labour had on workers' abilities to develop and maintain an uninterrupted working life. The impact of casual working patterns on workers' perceptions of their occupational status and identity was a key theme of the research. As well as developing an interest in workers' experiences of career progression, I was keen to examine non-standard working as a management tool and addressed this in a Masters' thesis (Herrington, 1994). There, I looked at flexible working patterns in the UK and Germany, drawing on the construction industry as an example and using Atkinson's model of 'The Flexible Firm' (1987).

At the time of my two earlier studies, non-standard working practices (especially flexible hours, fixed term or short term contracts and the use of self employed contractors) were often presented as management responses to short-term fluctuations in demand for labour. Thus, such contracts were generally discussed as being imposed on workers rather than being requested by them. Over the last 10 years greater awareness of, and support for, non standard working practices has led to changes in the composition of the non-standard working population. In addition, as the labour market has become more buoyant and levels of recorded unemployment have decreased, labour, and often skilled labour, has become scarcer. Employers have had to consider ways of retaining valuable staff, or of attracting new members of staff.

Contrary to the experiences of those surveyed in my earlier pieces of work, the non standard working practices experienced by those in the professions are generally requested by the workers, rather than being imposed on them by management. Despite this, those adopting non-standard working practices are sometimes considered to be 'time deviants'. This is particularly the case with professional occupations, especially where the profession in question has followed a 'traditional', 'male' structure of development; that of full time education followed by continuous career progression, through well established professional hierarchies, without breaks for children or other caring

responsibilities. The focus of this study is on how non-standard working practices have been adopted and experienced by those working in the professional labour market, how they impact on career development, how far they are accepted and promoted by management and colleagues, and whether and how the 'traditional' professional working structure is changing.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The following chapters explore the experiences of my respondents, and also provide contextual and theoretical material on the changing nature of the labour market and, in particular, the origins and development of the professional labour market, with particular reference to the professions of accountancy and architecture.

Chapter one provides an examination of non-standard working practices. It discusses the varying forms that such employment practices take and also highlights the impact they can have on training, job security and skill levels. The chapter discusses both key elements of non-standard employment, and the policy and economic context in which such developments have taken place.

Chapter two draws on the detailed literature on non-standard working practices mentioned in chapter one. It includes a further consideration of theories of non-standard working within the professions, offering a broader consideration of the literature concerning non standard working practices within the professions and outlining the key areas which are developed on the basis of my own study, in chapters six and seven.

Chapter three places the professions, and in particular the accounting and architecture professions, within a broader theoretical framework. The chapter considers how these professions developed, and continue to develop, and examines both their external relationships with the state and the market, and their internal relationships, with (sometimes competing), intra-professional groups. In this way the chapter develops some of the concepts introduced in chapters one and two. In particular it illustrates how wider market dynamics impact on the development and structure of professional groups, the working practices within them, and professionals themselves.

Chapter four provides a discussion of the methods and methodologies adopted in this study. It discusses the theoretical framework within which the research was developed, undertaken and analysed, as well as the methods adopted. The chapter considers the practical, analytical and ethical dimensions of the research and reports on the number of interviews undertaken at each stage of the research, the strategies adopted to identify possible respondents and, later, to improve response rates.

Chapter five analyses and discusses the data from the questionnaire surveys. It draws on early findings from the further in-depth interviews to develop a picture of the formation of the two professions under consideration. The analysis of survey data provides information on, amongst other things: the 'typical' career paths for each profession; the levels of qualification achieved by the respondents; their current and anticipated working patterns, and more general demographic and household information.

Chapter six explores key issues which emerged both from the survey data and from the in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of the respondents. In particular, the chapter examines notions of time deviance, 'macho' cultures of long hours and attitudes towards part time working. It offers a consideration of the varying rationales behind working time decisions and the respondents' perceptions of their future career development.

The organisational and individual responses to non-standard working are outlined in more detail in chapter seven of my study. It looks at the reasons for non-standard working, and the strategies developed by professionals aiming to balance home and work commitments. The chapter provides 'typologies' of non-standard working practices, drawing on the evidence from this study's research and on other theoretical work.

The conclusion argues that the dynamic nature of the labour market, and the continued development of the 'professional project' undermine the false logic, perpetuated by some academics and practitioners, that non-standard working practices equate to an uncommitted workforce. The conclusion revisits the Flexible Firm model developed by Atkinson (1987), to highlight how non-standard working professionals remain core members of the labour market and their professional group. It argues that any analysis of the professional project, and its relationship with the wider labour market, must be premised upon a

wider understanding of the way in which professionals interact with their labour markets at a micro and macro level. The continuation of the dominant model of 'traditional, male' professional labour market participation ignores the increasingly dynamic nature of many individuals' interactions with their professional field. The conclusion argues that until this 'standard' model is replaced, non-standard working professionals will continue to be viewed and treated as members of an 'other', less committed, workforce.

### **Non-standard working practices: current issues and labour market dynamics**

As highlighted in the introduction, the focus of this research is on a specific 'sub-set' of the flexible labour market. As will be examined in more detail later in this chapter, increases in both the supply of, and demand for, more flexible forms of employment have led to the further development of non-standard working practices.

The evolution of the flexible labour market debate has been informed by a number of perspectives. Early commentators (Atkinson, 1987, McGregor and Sproull, 1992, Beatson, 1995) examined how flexible forms of employment were being adopted by employers, in periods of high labour supply, to meet fluctuating levels of demand. Later studies examined the impact of such practices on the labour force, examining issues such as access to training, autonomy over working hours and changing work remits (Rainbird et al, 1999, Burchell et al, 1999, Felstead et al, 1998). In addition, other research was focussing on how employee requirements to meet home and work commitments were leading to requests for, and the adoption of, non-standard working practices (Crompton et al, 1998, Epstein et al, 1999, Yeandle et al, 2003). It is this latter body of research that my study aims to explore and develop through a detailed examination of non standard working practices within accountancy and architecture.

#### **A working definition**

As will be examined later in this chapter, non-standard working practices comprise one element of the wider 'flexible labour system'. This study is not concerned generally with the development of flexible labour processes but, rather, it focuses on the emergence of a number of forms of working that constitute a change from the 'traditional'<sup>1</sup> model of professional employment.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'traditional' carefully. In this context it is used to refer to those working practices most commonly associated with the male dominated, professional, labour market, those being: full time hours, high workplace visibility and a 'work first' approach to one's career and home life.



In this specific context, the working practices under consideration are those of part time working, term time hours, portfolio, peripheral employment<sup>2</sup> and self employment. All these terms are examined in detail later in this chapter.

From the outset, I wish to make a distinction between non-standard *labour* and non-standard *working*. As later chapters will confirm, the focus of this study is on the latter. In order to understand the contexts in which non-standard working practices operate, it is necessary also to consider the wider dynamics of non-standard labour. Whilst the term non-standard labour can refer to unskilled work or to short term contracts for specific roles, the non-standard working practices considered within this study concern practices adopted by those working in highly skilled and specialised areas of employment. This builds on an established usage of the term 'non-standard working practices' within discussions of the highly qualified, professional labour market (Epstein et al op cit, Crompton et al, 1990, 1998, Hoque and Kirkpatrick 2003).

As with the development of any labour market system, processes and practices evolve over a period of time and within specific contexts. It is to a broader consideration of such processes and contexts that this discussion now turns.

### **The development of the non-standard debate**

The use of non-standard or casual labour has been historically concentrated in a number of sectors: agriculture, construction, dock work and some parts of the service sector. Casual labour has been used for many years as a temporary solution to short term staffing problems, most often in times of high unemployment and large scale labour surplus.<sup>3</sup> In the main, the work undertaken in these areas has been largely unskilled and routinised. Casual labour is still common within these sectors. This study explores an aspect of non-standard working which has been comparatively little discussed. Its focus

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<sup>2</sup> These terms will be developed more fully later in the chapter. Portfolio employment, a term coined by Handy (1989) refers to a form of employment where, in this case, professionals have a number of, often related, positions. Peripheral employment in this thesis refers to employment in areas on the periphery of professional practice such as architectural journalism or lecturing.

<sup>3</sup> For social historical viewpoints of casual labour see for example Roberts (1971) *A Classic Slum*, Woodruff (2000) *The Road to Nab End* and Orwell (1937) *The Road to Wigan Pier*

is on professionals' (supply side) attempts to balance work and home commitments, rather than on employer (demand) led attempts to cut wage bills during times of recession. The professions under consideration, architecture and accountancy, are examples of well-established occupations which in recent decades have provided clear career paths within these fields. Levels of job security are generally high and job tenures are long. As will be examined in the later, empirical chapters, any movements towards increased working time flexibility are more a reflection of the professions' attempts to retain valued staff, rather than a cost cutting, profit maximisation, policy on the part of organisations.

Historically, and most recently, since the oil crises of 1973 and 1978, the labour market experiences of lower skilled and manual workers especially have been characterised by periods of unemployment. Comparing the work histories of those who started work prior to the early 1970s with those who started after, it is clear that the mid 1970s signalled a break from the structured, often single employer career pattern (Atkinson, 1987) commonly experienced by men. Yeandle (1982, 1984) provides a detailed analysis of the more disjointed employment careers of women. The break from a single employer career pattern is not exclusively the experience of those concentrated in the lower and unskilled occupations. Employees from differing occupational groups have witnessed increasingly dislocated career paths, as the job for life has become a far less common phenomenon. Beck, in an analysis of the working lives of, predominantly, men (1992) states that:

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*"Until well into the 1970s 'lifelong full-time work' was the temporal organizational standard for planning and utilising labor power in the plant, as well as in biographical life contexts. ....In the current and coming waves of automation, this system of standardized full employment is beginning to soften and fray at the margins into flexibilisations of its three supporting pillars: labor law, work site and working hours. Thus the boundaries between work and non-work are becoming fluid. Flexible, pluralized forms of underemployment are spreading." (Beck, 1992:142)*

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The large-scale decline in manufacturing and heavy industry witnessed since the oil crisis of the 1970s has had negative impacts on many individuals and communities. In many cases, secure, skilled manual work in these sectors has been replaced by short term, low paid, insecure positions. Many of the new

jobs emerging in and around these former occupational communities<sup>4</sup> are based on the service sector and are generally paid at, or just above, the minimum wage level.

Over the past 10 years, research on non-standard employment has revealed important changes in the underlying causes for such practices. When, in 1993, I undertook early research into non-standard working practices within the construction and trawling industries (Herrington, 1993), they were predominantly viewed as management strategies, introduced as a means of lowering wage levels and matching staffing levels to production demands. In short, they were practices imposed by management on employees in a time of recession and high unemployment. More recently, in contrast, as the economy has strengthened and officially recorded unemployment has decreased, flexible working arrangements have come to be seen as a way of attracting key staff or of retaining valued employees. As such, many forms of flexible working are now discussed as a positive employment option for prospective employees rather than a last resort form of employment at a time of poor labour market conditions.

The debate surrounding the apparent increase in non standard working has been divided. Early commentators on the relatively new phenomenon, Atkinson and Meager (1986), saw the growth of non standard working (in their case, flexible working) as a direct result of a conscious and concerted attempt on the part of employers to increase profit and to lower production costs. Atkinson (1987) developed the concept of the ideal type “flexible firm”, an organisation operating non standard working practices comprising numerical flexibility; functional flexibility, and distancing or sub-contracting.

Atkinson argues that ‘numerical flexibility’ involves matching the supply of labour with production levels. In this way, extra staff are recruited as and when needed, but remain at the periphery of the organisation. ‘Functional Flexibility’ refers to the characteristics of the core work force which, in the main, is full

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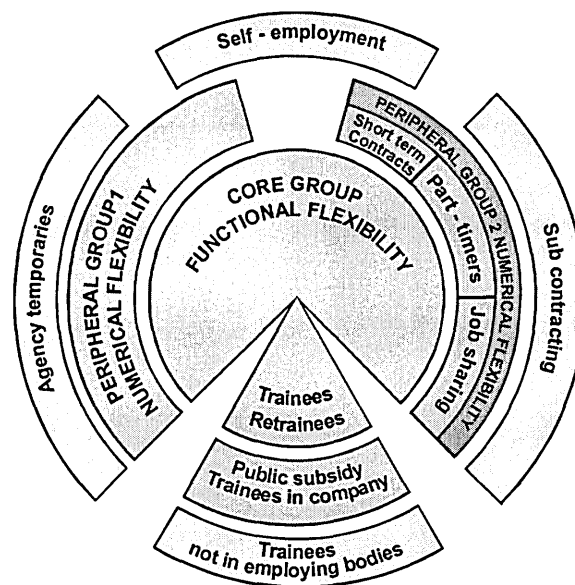
<sup>4</sup> One only has to consider the coal mining villages of South Wales or Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire or the steel work communities of Sheffield, Rotherham or South Wales. The fishing community of Hessle Road in Hull is also a classic example of a community based entirely on one industry. Since the decline of deep sea fishing from Hull, the Hessle Road community has been subject to large scale relocation to out of city satellite estates, economic and physical deprivation and very high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity.

time and performs the central tasks of the firm. This work force is characterised by its core, flexible skills which are required by the employing firms even in times of low demand. The use of other, 'periphery workers' has numerous advantages for the employer, including low wage costs, and few on-costs such as redundancy rights.<sup>5</sup>

As discussed later in the study and in the conclusion, this early theoretical model of a flexible firm can be usefully adapted to explore changes in the working practices and structures of specific industries or occupations. The model illustrated below will be reworked in my later analysis to consider only the position of those working part time hours, flexi hours, those who are self employed or working on a portfolio of positions and those on the periphery of professional practice.

**Figure 1.1**

### **Atkinson's Flexible Firm**



Source: Institute of Manpower Studies, 1987

<sup>5</sup> This use of labour could be argued to reflect Marx's theory of the reserve army of labour, that is, in the majority of modern economies, there are reserves of unemployed or non-employed workers who, during periods of high demand and production, join the labour force, only to return to unemployment or non-employment when the economy retracts.

This model provides a useful reference point for a consideration of the development of non-standard working practices. However, Atkinson's early analysis has been criticised from a number of angles. His research was based on firms using non-standard labour, meaning that few comparisons can be made between those firms and organisations that make limited use of such labour. He also concentrated on larger organisations and, as Pollert (1991) argues, this limited the applicability of the final research as the majority of organisations in Great Britain employ fewer than three hundred workers. Despite the criticisms levelled at Atkinson's work, his core analysis of the three forms of flexibility, functional, numerical and distancing, continues to be used as the basis for further, more detailed analyses, (by amongst others Brewster 1995 and Raines 1999). As demonstrated in my study, the model of core and periphery workers is one that can be expanded to consider the labour market strategies of other occupations. The usefulness of this theoretical model for understanding professions is discussed in greater detail in Chapter seven, drawing on the evidence from this study's empirical research. There it will be argued that, in accountancy and architecture, the location of employees at the core or periphery of professional practice is determined by the choices employees make rather than by management strategies. I will argue that although this is in part due to the development within the professions of highly specialised areas of work for which there is high demand for all types of worker, it also results from a general movement in which professionals' working practices have come to be more affected by both home and work considerations.

As Pollert (1991) argued, a number of factors have come into play in the general increase in non-standard labour and non standard working. High levels of unemployment in the early 1980s and again during the 1990s resulted in larger pools of available labour requiring work. Thus she argued that firms' changed practices could be seen simply as responses to a changing external environment. With the supply of labour outstripping demand, and in periods of economic uncertainty, employers are more likely to adopt staffing practices that provide them with greater options for staff reduction. In addition, emerging evidence from my study, discussed further in chapters six and seven, highlights that the changing dynamics of the labour market and of individual

professions appear to be driving a movement towards greater specialisation, coupled with a desire to ensure a greater balance between work and home commitments.

### **Approaches to non-standard working**

Greater labour market flexibility, including non-standard working practices, within the UK has arisen not only through changes to hours and tenure, but also through the adoption of new methods of working including multi-tasking, that is, the development of a core group of workers who are able to undertake a variety of duties. Rainbird et al (1999) surveyed three local authorities and three health trusts in an attempt to identify the impact of job changes and training on unskilled or low skilled workers (Rainbird et al, *ibid*). Her study distinguished the following refinements to existing definitions of flexibility (see earlier discussion of Atkinson, 1987);

- job enlargement, involving the addition of tasks of a similar level of competence to those undertaken. This may or may not lead to the intensification of work;
- job enrichment, a term used to describe the changing nature of work, (the worker perceives additions to their former post as interesting/rewarding), and
- upskilling, involving the addition of more difficult tasks, often accompanied by greater work status.

The enlargement of a number of jobs, especially within the health service case studies included in Rainbird's research, was reported as rewarding for a number of staff. Many reported enjoying the new aspects of their posts, such as work with patients or additional levels of responsibility. For some employees, job enlargement, along with developmental training, enabled them to gain access to areas of work where formerly entrance was governed by the acquisition of formal qualifications. Moves towards job enlargement have been

coupled with the introduction of newly recognised vocational qualifications<sup>6</sup>. Conversely, job enlargement can also lead to professional sidelining. Movements into new areas of work, coupled with increased levels of responsibility, can lead to a gradual move of professional focus away from specialist skills and towards more generic areas of work. As will be examined more fully in chapter seven, one respondent in my own study experienced such a change to her professional work remit. Having agreed that the practice needed a greater level of human resource specialism, the respondent, the only female director, took on the responsibility for this role. She found that the new role limited the time available to spend in professional practice and changed, in her perspective, the way in which she was viewed in the practice. She felt that she was associated more and more strongly with the human resources role than with her professional role.

Rainbird et al found that while moves towards recognising the status of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were viewed as offering job enrichment to those undertaking these qualifications, they were also leading to conflicts between the definitions of roles, blurring the divides between qualified and unqualified workers. Admittance to many positions had previously been protected by specific entrance qualifications and professional codes of conduct. Rainbird and colleagues found that the division between qualified and unqualified workers was the most sensitive to encroachment. In effect, upskilling for some workers was essentially deskilling for others.

Job enlargement or expansion may not necessarily be a positive experience for all those affected. Rainbird's study identified a number of staff who had been given wider job remits which led to increased job satisfaction but which also resulted in their undertaking tasks with which they were not comfortable. Some of those interviewed felt that the training was forced upon them, resulting in increased levels of job responsibility for the same levels of pay.

Increases in flexibility are not only affecting job descriptions and progression, but are also impacting on contractual issues. Rainbird et al (op. cit.) found that some workers, formerly employed on contracts that paid additional sums for working over unsocial hours including weekends, bank holidays and overtime,

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<sup>6</sup> Qualifications included National Vocational Qualifications up to level 3 (equivalent to A' level),

no longer received such payments following new flexible working hours contracts. All workers in one organisation who undertook job development and training were automatically placed on the new contracts. As a result, a number of established workers were not taking any form of training for fear of losing their 'better' contracts. This, in essence, could lead to deskilling.

### **Non-standard working practices: employer strategies**

Brewster (1994) found that, amongst those employers surveyed in a study of human resource practices across Europe, there had been no definite human resource management move towards an increased use of non-standard employment practices. Amongst the potentially positive aspects of employing non-standard labour, a low rate of absenteeism is highlighted as a key factor. Flexible workers are less likely to be absent (arguably this is likely to be the case if they are only to be paid for the hours worked). Those employed on short term contracts are also likely to be more productive and willing to work longer hours. Greater work pressures, and a need to 'be seen' to work longer hours are cited as key issues currently facing professional employees. The seemingly prevailing wisdom - that long hours equate to professional or occupational commitment and competence - is likely to drive the working behaviour of a number of employees, especially so for those seeking contract extension or renewals. This may be because they are able to work at a high intensity for a limited period, or that, having been contracted for a specific task, they are more task focused. Work intensity may also be a result of fewer chances for work based socialising. Short term employees do not get the same opportunities to build up work based relationships as their permanent colleagues. Such working conditions can lead to alienation. Research into portfolio working (Cohen and Mallon, 1999) found that those working on a number of short term contracts did experience feelings of isolation. They missed collegial contact and felt that they missed out on potential job development.

From another perspective, a reduction in trade union involvement and influence could also be viewed as an important factor in the context of general shifts in working practices. Non-standard workers are much less likely to be



unionised. Amongst the respondents to my research, very few were members of a union. Membership of a professional body was much more common and was, in some cases, a necessary requirement for professional practice. Research into union density across all occupations in the UK, found that, in 1980, 50 per cent of workers were union affiliated, while by 1997 the figure had fallen to 30 per cent (Burchell et al 1999). This has had a dramatic impact: in 1980, 70 per cent of British workers had their basic terms and conditions agreed through collective bargaining, but by 1997 that figure stood at only 36 per cent. Thus movements towards more flexible working practices across firms are more likely to have been determined by management strategies or informal agreements with staff members than by union involvement or pressure.

Further research focusing on small and medium sized employers found three approaches to flexible working: holistic, selective and resistant (Dex and Scheibl 2002). Nearly all employers surveyed as part of the research, if they offered flexible working, offered it on an informal basis, that is, without any formal, structured organisational policy. Employers demonstrating holistic approaches were more likely to have a workforce dominated by women with younger, pre and early school age children. The resistant employers had workforces comprising 'prime age' employees between 25-40 years which were often dominated by younger male employees. Holistic and selective employers were more likely to state that their practices had arisen from employee requests, personal experiences of flexible working, external or published evidence on the benefits for business or from face to face recommendations. Employees who took up these working practices were likely to demonstrate loyalty towards their organisation and increase productivity as a result. In short, the drivers were business orientated rather than people orientated. Resistant employers voiced concern about the amount of paperwork required to adopt such practices, the anticipated 'red tape' associated with changes in working times and negative impacts on productivity. The management and workplace practices that underpinned the successful implementation of flexible working arrangements included: a flat management structure and approachable managers; good employer and employee communications, and clear reward structures where employees

were expected to demonstrate commitment to the organisation in return for more flexible working arrangements (Dex and Scheibl, 2002).

Research into line managers' approaches to family friendly employment (Yeandle et al, 2003) found that managers were more likely to agree to more flexible working arrangements for those employees who had demonstrated commitment to the organisation. A system of informal reciprocity existed in many of the organisations surveyed.

Those professionals surveyed as part of my research who were employees, were employed by organisations that could be defined as selective or holistic. The organisational approaches to flexible or non-standard working practices appeared to be largely determined by organisational size. Larger employers (in this research defined as those with over 50 employees) were more likely to have a number of staff working non-standard hours or adopting other non-standard working practices. The largest organisations, often multi-site national or international concerns, were the most likely to have formalised written guidelines on such working practices. The principal forms of non-standard working in these organisations were part time hours, flexi-hours and occasional home working. All the organisations had differing approaches to non-standard working, depending upon the seniority or specialism of the staff member in question. A number of respondents commented that administrative and support staff had their requests for changes to their working practices accepted more readily than their professional colleagues.

### **Non-standard working practices: flexible working hours**

Flexible working hours comprise a common form of non-standard working. Many local authorities have adopted such policies. In 2001 nine in ten local authorities allowed staff to vary their hours, and part time hours, job-sharing and flexitime were almost universally practised, (Birch et al, 2001). Virtually all government departments and agencies provide one or more forms of flexible working including part time employment, career breaks, job shares or flexi time. The number of staff working part time has increased and in 1999 over 11 per cent of civil servants worked part time compared with three per cent in 1984 (Cabinet Office, 1999). This quest for a greater degree of flexibility has

been spurred on by the persistence of employment protection in most of the EU countries. Across Europe, different member states have responded to the need for greater flexibility within the labour market in differing fashions. In France, short time and part time working practices have been encouraged through subsidies to employers. In Germany, union pressure has resulted in shorter working weeks and greater working time flexibility. Within the UK, policies aimed at deregulation and increased flexibility of the labour market did little to improve working time flexibility. Policies within the UK have been directed more towards encouraging inward investment, by making working rules and regulations more amenable at a national, macro level than at a local or individual micro level. However, there is little evidence that a heavily deregulated labour market, as embodied by the UK, is more attractive to inward investors than a more centralised, regulated labour market as is the case in Germany (Raines et al 1999). Companies interviewed in a cross national study of labour market flexibility and inward investment reported that an area of key importance was labour force skill flexibility and that Germany, with its highly regulated vocational training system, offered more highly skilled and adaptable workers than the UK (Raines, *ibid*, 50).

The trend towards greater flexibility within the labour market is reflected in other areas, including subcontracting and outwork. During the mid 1980s, the Conservative government put an increasing number of services out to compulsory competitive tender (CCT). School meals and cleaning services were no longer necessarily supplied by single organisations but went to those companies able to provide the most reasonable service. Rainbird et al *op. cit.*, in her study of working practices in the public sector, interviewed workers, some of whom had formerly been employed by local authorities prior to their positions being sub contracted to tendering organisations. In a number of cases, workers were effectively deskilled, with their 'new' job roles preventing them from undertaking other duties. Some of these workers commented that, when employed by the local authority, they were able to informally expand their job roles by undertaking other associated duties. Work such as this would not be remunerated but would offer job enrichment. In their new positions, work was generally routinised and demotivating, often with fewer workers undertaking the same, if not increased, workloads. Additional work burdens or

'work overload', have been highlighted as a negative result of increased flexibility. Burchell and colleagues found that whilst multi-skilling and flexibility in the labour market is a positive move for employers, for many employees, it can lead to confusion of roles, additional tasks and general over burdening (Burchell at al, op cit.).

### **Non-standard working practices: temporary agency employment**

For many looking for non-permanent employment, the temporary agency provides access to a large number of short tem employment opportunities. This is not to state, however, that all forms of flexible or temporary employment are attractive options for employees. The temporary labour market, characterised mostly by agency based recruitment services, is often poorly paid, poorly protected and vulnerable to changes in the economy and employment levels. Jobs secured through temporary agencies are less likely to be highly skilled, provide access to additional work related training or lead to promotion.<sup>7</sup> Figures from the UK Labour Force Survey, illustrated in table 1.1 below, <sup>8</sup> show that the proportion of temporary employees, expressed as a percentage of total employees has been decreasing over the last eight years.

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<sup>7</sup> Regulations being considered by the Department for Trade and Industry will increase the level of regulation and employment protection for temporary workers, including access to sickness and holiday pay. The linking of employment rights to employment status is a major problem for temporary workers. Some recent employment legislation has taken account of this problem by explicitly extended new rights to 'workers' instead of 'employees'. Hence temporary and contract workers are covered by the National Minimum Wage, introduced in the 1998 National Minimum Wage Act, and are entitled to 20 days paid annual leave as a result of the 1998 Working Time Regulations, the UK implementation of the Working Time Directive. Even where employment status is established, many temporary workers do not qualify for basic employment rights because they fail to build up the necessary continuity or length of employment. The right to paid holidays for example applies once a person has been in employment for 13 weeks. This provides a clear incentive to agencies to limit contracts to 12 weeks. According to the 1999 Labour Force Survey slightly under a fifth of agency workers had been in their job for less than three months at the time of the survey. Other rights, such as to maternity leave, only apply after a year's service. A third of agency workers, according to the LFS, said that their job would last less than one year, and thus clearly would not be covered by these regulations. A recent survey of temporary employment conducted by the Department for Education and Employment (Tremlett and Collins 1999) found a considerable difference in gender in attitudes to non-permanent employment. Women were generally more likely to positively seek non-permanent employment, mainly because of the flexibility it provided. The National Health Service has recently started its own employment agency -NHS Bank- to stop nurses leaving the NHS to work for private agencies because these provide greater control over shifts and hours of work. Men on the other hand were more likely than women to mention financial benefits from their non-permanent status.

<sup>8</sup> Spring Quarters 1995,1999 and 2003

**Table 1.1 Temporary employees as a percentage of total employees, UK, 1995-2003**

|      | <b>All</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1995 | 7.3        | 6.5         | 8.2           |
| 1999 | 7.1        | 6.5         | 7.8           |
| 2003 | 6.1        | 5.3         | 6.9           |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter, 2004

In 1995, almost half of those working on temporary contracts stated that they could not find a permanent position. By 2003, this proportion had decreased to just over a quarter (26.7 per cent). Men were more likely to state that they were unable to find a permanent position than women (33 per cent compared with 21 per cent).

**Table 1.2 Reasons for temporary employee status, UK 1995-2003**

|      | <b>Could not find perm.<br/>employment</b> | <b>Did not want perm.<br/>employment</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1995 | 43.1                                       | 28.1                                     | 28.8         |
| 1999 | 35.1                                       | 31.9                                     | 33.1         |
| 2003 | 26.7                                       | 30.4                                     | 42.9         |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter, 2004

The Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS98)<sup>9</sup> found that in 1998 the key reasons for agency use across all sectors were: freezes on permanent staff; shortage of specialist skills within the existing workforce; a need for short term cover, and a need to match peaks in demand with a flexible staff cover.

It should not, however, be assumed that non-standard workers have turned to this form of work because it is their only avenue. Purcell et al (1999) found that non-standard employment was a positive form of tenure for a number of workers. For those in higher occupational groups, employees were able to have more influence over their hours, adapting their working hours to match

<sup>9</sup> WERS 98 is a national survey of people at work. It follows in the acclaimed footsteps of earlier surveys conducted in 1980, 1984 and 1990. The survey is jointly sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry, ACAS, the Economic and Social Research Council, and the Policy Studies Institute. Its purpose is to provide an account, for all to use, of management - employee relations. For this reason, the survey is supported by leading organisations like the Confederation of British Industry, the Trades Union Congress, and the Institute of Personnel and Development.

fluctuating workplace demand. As a result, they were expected to work long hours as and when required, but had a greater say over working time. This resulted in higher levels of satisfaction and greater control over the differing demands of work and home life. In the study, highly skilled workers were often offered non-standard contractual arrangements as a way to attract them to the company. These findings support those of an earlier American study. Jacobs and Gerson (1997) found that professional, technical and managerial workers worked longer hours than blue collar workers. This was the case for both male and female employees. However, workers in more senior positions and with higher qualifications reported having more autonomy over working hours. Males reported this more than the females interviewed.

Purcell et al (op. cit.) found that manual shift workers were also generally satisfied with their working arrangements. They reported being able to manage both work and home commitments. However, unlike those non-standard employees in the higher skilled occupations, the shift workers were unable to have any say over working arrangements. Short notice of changing shifts was cited as an area of dissatisfaction with shift working. Highly skilled occupational groups are able to use their, often scarce, skills to their advantage when seeking areas of employment, an area that will be examined in more detail in the empirical chapters six and seven.

### **Non-standard working practices: fixed term employment**

Fixed term staff<sup>10</sup>, those employed directly by an employer but for a discrete period of time, also comprise a large part of the non-standard working population. Heavily concentrated in the public sector, fixed term employees offer employers a high level of flexibility within positions for which there is often time limited funding. This is frequently the case in academic and research posts as well as in local and central government. Fixed term workers enjoy many of the conditions enjoyed by the permanent colleagues but frequently do not have access to redundancy payments nor, if contracted for less than a

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<sup>10</sup> Fixed Term employees are defined, in this thesis, as those employed, directly by their employer, on a contract with specific start and end dates. They differ from temporary employees who have an employment contract or relationship with a temporary work agency but are placed with and do their work for a third party.

year, have access to payments such as maternity leave. In October 2002 the Fixed Term Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations were introduced in Britain<sup>11</sup>. Employees on fixed term contracts were all to be entitled to equal treatment with their colleagues on permanent contracts. One of the main areas of reform was the abolition of redundancy waiver clauses. These have been a common feature of fixed term contracts with often long serving members of staff (those who have had a series of fixed term contracts, often working for the same employer for five years or more on short term contracts), having to sign away their right to redundancy payments. Waiver clauses are now abolished for all contracts entered into or renewed from 1 October 2002 although waivers in existing contracts continue to be enforceable. Employees on post-October 2002 contracts are entitled to redundancy payments as long as they have completed two year's service. In order to attract staff and ensure staff retention, many employers are now moving away from a reliance upon fixed term contracts. For example, in the civil service, fixed term employees can only be brought in for specific, time limited or task specific projects that can not be undertaken by existing staff and for which there would be no benefit to the business to recruit permanent staff.

### **Non-standard working practices: self employment**

There is no uniform definition of self-employment. Broadly, the self employed can be defined as those who are not covered by a contract of employment and provide their services directly to a customer. As well as there being no uniform definition of self employment, neither is there a single definition of a self employed worker. The self employed are a heterogeneous group, ranging from those located in highly specialised, well paid, occupations, to those more economically disadvantaged, who are taking up self employment to move away from the margins of the labour market. Self employment has also been promoted as a means of re-entering the labour market (Bryson and White 1996). Of particular interest to my study, self employment is also viewed by some as a means of balancing home and work requirements. Secondary

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<sup>11</sup> The Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations came into force on 1 October 2002. They make certain changes to the way fixed-term employees are

analysis of two large scale surveys on parenting and childcare (Bell and LaValle, 2003) found that, of those mothers reporting self employed status, 79 per cent had moved to this form of working to meet childcare demands, compared with 14 per cent of the fathers surveyed. As the research further reports, self employment did not ensure an easier balancing of home and work requirements and in some cases, self employed workers reported greater difficulties meeting childcare needs than their employed counterparts. This was due, in part, to their needing to work longer hours, including weekend and evening work, when formally provided childcare is scarce.

**Table 1.3 Self employed workers by sex, UK, 1995-2003 (%)**

|      | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>All Self<br/>Employed</b> |
|------|-------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1995 | 75.5        | 24.5          | 100.0                        |
| 1999 | 73.7        | 26.3          | 100.0                        |
| 2003 | 72.7        | 27.3          | 100.0                        |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter 2004

As illustrated in the following table, the proportion of the male workforce with self employed status has decreased slightly over the last eight years. The proportion of women has remained fairly static.

**Table 1.4 Self employment by sex, as a percentage of total workers, UK, 1995-2003**

|      | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1995 | 17.7        | 6.9           |
| 1999 | 15.7        | 6.7           |
| 2003 | 15.9        | 7.0           |

Source: Labour Market Trends, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter, 2004

As well as the issue of long working hours for some of the self employed, there are also a number of other problems associated with taking on self employed status. This is particularly the case in some occupations. The impact that sickness or a need for short term absence can have on a self employed business is also potentially ruinous and for some, the strict guidelines

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treated by the law and should be treated by their employers.



surrounding their professional indemnity insurance prevents them from hiring 'locum' staff during holiday periods or other non-work periods. One example of this is the architecture profession. All architecture firms must have personal indemnity insurance, protecting them and their clients from accidental damage to property or persons. The insurance must be taken out in a company or individual's name. In large companies, all architects are covered by a practice wide policy. However, for self employed architects (who make up the bulk of 'domestic' architects), regulations mean that they are unable to add another name to their policy for a short period. This essentially means that they cannot employ someone for a short period to cover holiday or sick leave without taking out additional and increasingly expensive insurance.

The term self employed covers a wide segment of the labour force. The majority do not work on their own but subcontract to bigger companies. Regulation is difficult as many work long hours and official working hours and conditions are hard to ascertain. Despite the implementation of the Europe wide Working Time Directive<sup>12</sup>, limiting employees' weekly average hours to 48, self employment is one of the exempted forms of employment. Self employment is heavily concentrated in a number of industries, especially in distribution and construction. Within the professions, the majority of architects practice as self employed or companies limited by guarantee. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is keen to support its small businesses and self employed practitioners. It represents a large number of small practices with, 95 percent of members of RIBA in small practices (fewer than 5 people). People are looking to chartered surveyors for domestic work rather than

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<sup>12</sup> The aim of the working time directive is to ensure that workers are protected against adverse effects on their health and safety caused by working excessively long hours, having inadequate rest or disrupted work patterns. The Working Time Directive provides for:

- a maximum 48 hour working week averaged over a reference period;
- a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours a day;
- a rest break where the working day is longer than six hours;
- a minimum rest period of one day a week; and
- a statutory right to annual paid holiday of 4 weeks;

The working time directive is implemented in UK domestic law by the Working Time Regulations 1998 (Statutory Instrument 1998/1833) which entered into force on 30 September that year. certain workers currently are excluded from the Directive including whole areas of the transport sector, doctors in training and off shore workers. Around 5.6 million people (or 4 per cent of total employment in the EU) work in these sectors, mostly in the road transport industry. The arrangements for excluded sectors are under consideration by the Council which will report later in 2003.

architects, assuming that architects would not be interested in small pieces of domestic work.

*“At the smaller end of the scale, architects are being compounded by the guys who draw you up a plan in their back bedroom and by surveyors as well. People are having a bad time, their profit is under £10,000 a year and that is their income that they have to live on. The big practices on the whole are doing fine. Also there is a north/south split, it’s much harder to make a living in this part of the world [Yorkshire].”* (Professor of architecture and retired practitioner, 2001).<sup>13</sup>

Within accountancy, partners and senior staff in small and medium sized firms often take on self employed status. For many this is a key intention from joining the profession. Such a move does, however, place certain pressures upon them. Whilst long hours and heavy work commitments lead to increased profits and thus income, for those needing to take time off work, for example for sick leave or maternity leave, self employed status can restrict the amount of time available for such leave.

For other workers trying to balance home and work commitments, self employment offers the opportunity for some level of autonomy in deciding working hours and general working practices. That said, and, as is examined more fully in chapter seven, for those self employed architects and accountants, the move away from employee status can lead to longer working hours, greater work pressure and no access to the employee benefits of supported training, sickness and holiday pay and general collegial support.

### **Non- standard working practices: working at home**

One area of flexible working that has increased in recent years is that of working at home.<sup>14</sup> Analysis of Labour Force Survey data (Felstead et al 2000) shows that almost 25 per cent of the British workforce does some of its work at home. Those working at home on a partial basis (that is, at least one day a

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<sup>13</sup> Interviewed as part of the present study. Quotations in italics without author references are all from this source.

<sup>14</sup> This differs from the other work practice of home working. This thesis is not looking at home working which is more commonly associated with low paid, piece work often related to the textiles industry and often involving workers from a number of minority ethnic groups. A number

week) are more likely to use ICT to facilitate this. Of non manual workers, just over 50 per cent stated that they could not work at home without ICT compared with twenty per cent of manual workers. Those who work mainly at home are more likely to be women and more likely to be employed in manual occupations. Those who work partially at home (at least 1 day a week) are more likely to be male and in higher grades. Non manual workers who work partly at home are likely to receive the same or slightly higher salary levels than their office based counterparts whilst manual home workers are more likely to be paid less than factory or workplace based workers. Unsurprisingly, women working at home for the majority of their time were much more likely to give childcare as the key reason for this than their male counterparts. Hasluck (2001) found that 22% of workplaces surveyed as part of a study into work-life balance reported having staff working at home at least occasionally, with this being more common amongst male employees than female (24% compared with 16%). Managerial and professional grades were more likely to work at home occasionally than other non-manual or manual grades. As is examined more fully in chapter six, working from home is one way in which an increasing number of professionals are attempting to reconcile home and work commitments. For those seeking to reduce their working hours, the ability, through ICT, to remain in contact with the office on days off has enabled some to push a successful business case for working part time.

### **Non-standard working practices: part time working**

Part time work is an area of non-standard employment that, simply by being one of the most common forms of employment tenure, may not appear 'non-standard'. Part time work is heavily gendered, reflecting perhaps its often cited use as a means of balancing employment and domestic responsibilities and a the highly gendered use of time. Women still do the majority of domestic duties. Even in households where both partners work full time, the women, in the main, undertake the bulk of domestic chores.

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of studies have examined the role of home working in the economy including Hakim (1987), Christensen (1988) and Felstead (2000).

**Table 1.5 Division of household chores, 2000/01 UK\*, (minutes per day)**

|                        | women | men |
|------------------------|-------|-----|
| Washing and ironing    | 26    | 4   |
| DIY**                  | 4     | 16  |
| Gardening and pet care | 18    | 21  |
| Shopping               | 34    | 2   |
| Housework              | 51    | 23  |
| Cooking and washing up | 76    | 36  |

Source: UK 2000 Time Use Survey, Office for National Statistics

\* data for adults aged 16 and above

\*\*includes vehicle repair and maintenance

Drawing on data from the Labour Force Survey, it is evident that part time employment is increasing as a proportion of total employment. As can be seen from the table below, the level of part time employment has stabilised for women but is growing for men.

**Table 1.6 Part time employees as a proportion of total employees, 1995 – 2003, UK**

|      | Male | Female | All  |
|------|------|--------|------|
| 1995 | 6.9  | 43.5   | 24.5 |
| 1999 | 8.2  | 43.4   | 25.2 |
| 2003 | 9.3  | 43.3   | 25.7 |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter, 2004

Part time employment is dominated by female employees. As table 1.7 illustrates, female part time employees still make up over 80 per cent of the part time employee labour force, although the balance has been changing in recent years.

**Table 1.7 Part time employees by sex, 1995 – 2003, UK**

|      | Male | Female |
|------|------|--------|
| 1995 | 14.5 | 85.5   |
| 1999 | 17.0 | 83.0   |
| 2003 | 18.7 | 81.3   |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring Quarter, 2004

The predominance of part time working in the non standard employment field does not represent an unambiguously positive move in the labour market. Whether or not the growth of part time employment is a positive development, especially for women, is strongly contested (see for example Warren 1999,

Hakim 1991, Rubery et al, 1999). Part time workers have been discriminated against in terms of pensions, maternity rights and other employee related entitlements. The Part Time Work Directive<sup>15</sup>, implemented in the UK in April 2000, gives a legal right to the equal treatment of part time workers with full time workers.

Despite the fact that a high proportion of female part time workers have childcare responsibilities, part time work does not necessarily mean family friendly work. Shift working and changes to the law on Sunday trading can mean that large numbers of part time employees work unsocial hours that may cause additional childcare problems. Indeed, increases in part time work may reflect, to a large extent, a need to balance competing childcare and employment needs. The UK continues to have very low levels of affordable childcare. A recent examination of women's economic activity in the UK demonstrates that the caring and home maker role is still predominantly the preserve of women (Duffield, 2002). In addition, for many working part time, their working status has a detrimental effect on their career progression (Hoque 2003, Brandth 2000 and Epstein et al, 1999). For many occupations, and especially for the professions, standard working practices are defined as full time. In addition, professions have traditionally been predominantly 'male' environments, that is, characterised as full time and 'work first'. Those adopting non-standard working practices may find that their professional status and commitment is questioned.

Tilly (1992) argues that a dualism is manifest in part time work. He identifies two forms of part time work: retention part time jobs, located in the core labour market, and used to attract and retain valuable staff who prefer part time working patterns, and secondary part time jobs, which are concentrated in the

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<sup>15</sup> The Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 introduced new rights for part-time workers. The measures reinforce the Government's policy of putting in place decent minimum standards whilst promoting a flexible and competitive workforce. Two amendments to the Regulations came into force on 1 October 2002. These cover Comparators (Regulation 2) and Access to Occupational Pension Scheme (Regulation 8(8)). The Part-time workers regulations ensure that Britain's part-timers are not treated less favourably than comparable full-timers in their terms and conditions, unless it is objectively justified. This means part-timers are entitled, for example, to: the same hourly rates of pay; the same access to company pension schemes; the same entitlements to annual leave and maternity/paternity leave on a pro rata basis; the same entitlement to contractual sick pay, and no less favourable treatment in access to training

poorly paid secondary labour market, have lower employer costs and increase flexibility for employers rather than for employees. Tilly argues that those employed in retention part time positions will be treated in a similar way to their full time counterparts in terms of work benefits.

However, those working part time hours in core or more specialised positions are more likely to be marginalised than their full time colleagues. Organisational practices and values continue to be based around full time employment models. The professions are strongly defined by notions of a 'standard' career pattern and distinct time frames such as three year degree programmes, three or four years of post graduate training and a clear career path through the various professional levels. The employment experiences of a large proportion of the female workforce do not match this standard model. Their experiences of the labour market and training are heavily determined by caring commitments, predominantly those of childcare. Career paths are, for women, more likely to be interrupted by spells of maternity leave, shorter hours working and entire spells out of the labour market.

The forms of non-standard working practices adopted by respondents to this study are explored in chapters five to seven. The strategies adopted by professionals, in order to meet competing work and home demands, are considered in detail. Developments in the non-standard working field have not occurred in isolation from wider labour market dynamics and it is to a consideration of these that the chapter now turns.

### **Non-standard working practices: the policy context**

At a national level, over the last fifteen years, government policies have been introduced to improve the working conditions and employment protection of non-standard workers. In an attempt to provide better working conditions for non-standard workers, a number of official policies have been introduced. In March 2000 the Labour administration launched its work-life balance campaign. The baseline study<sup>16</sup> found a high level of support for work-life

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<sup>16</sup> Involving an employer survey of 2,500 workplaces with five or more employees and interviews with staff in head offices of 250 firms and an employee survey of 7,500 employees (Hasluck 2001).

balance among both employers and employees, although apart from part time working, only a small proportion of employers operated flexible working arrangements. There was substantial demand from employees: more men wanted flexi time, compressed hours or annualised hours than women, while women were more likely to want term time or reduced hours. Approximately 20 per cent of workers worked from home occasionally, and, of those not currently working from home, around a third said they would like to do this. The incidence of work-life balance practices was greatest in the public sector.

The government launched its Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund in 2000, totalling £10.5 million over 3 years. The fund provides free consultancy advice on work/life balance practices. 176 employers are already receiving support through the fund. However, this drive towards work life balance policies may be constrained by the working environment. Employers and employees need to consider how flexible practices can be promoted as a 'normal' form of working time, and valued as such. Even where firms offer flexible working practices, take up can be low (Brandth and Kvande, 2001). When flexible practices are available, but are dependent upon the individual applying for them rather than on company-wide promotion of them, take up is low and staff fear that they will be seen as 'time deviant'. If non-standard working is used as a collective time management system, take up is higher.

*"If leave is collectively granted and collectively taken, the risks associated with taking it are perceived to disappear and fathers are able to act on their wish to be more involved with their children. This is in accordance with several studies concerning 'family friendly' employment policies in companies (Hochschild 1997, Lewis 1997, Epstein et al 1999) which have shown that the different policies are not used to any great extent by parents. As long as taking up family friendly policies is an individual option, the employee risks becoming a 'time deviant' (Epstein et al 1999) and thus marginalised." (Brandth and Kvande 2001: 265).*

The concept of time deviance emerges in a number of studies. An adherence, throughout the professions, to a 'long hours, high office visibility' culture within individual organisations or workplaces may continue to undermine any national promotion of part time, family friendly or non-standard working practices. In a buoyant economy, new entrants to the professions are still more interested in salary levels, career progression and development opportunities than in flexible working practices. Work that professions have undertaken or plan to

undertake will need to emphasise the business benefits on non-standard working, as well as confront the culture of long hours working that remains prevalent.

### Theories of the labour market

The changes to both employment structures and practices described above have taken place against an ongoing reassessment of the role of work within society by, amongst others, academics and policy makers. Discussion of non-standard employment practices needs to be located within wider debates concerning changes to the structure of waged labour. As discussed in the following chapters, developments affecting specific groups or occupations do not occur in isolation from macro changes to the labour market.

The world of paid work is key to much of modern, western, society. Despite predicted moves towards a more leisured society, away from post industrial revolution models of employment and industry (Bell 1974, Leadbetter 1999), employment, or the lack of it, remains at the heart of the day to day processes of life. Beck (1992), in a consideration of changes to the structure of wage labour, argues that reactions to such changes are not only rooted in considerations of the economic impact of a decline in waged labour but are also rooted in the social. In a consideration of the dual roles of social (family) and economic (employment) structures, with a focus on paternal employment, Beck illustrates how employment structures every stage of an individuals' life, from a child being educated in order to join the labour force, to working age adults' leisure time being defined as 'non-work', through to old age being defined purely in terms of its relationship (or lack of it) to wage labour.

*"Wage labor [sic] and an occupation have become the axis of living in the industrial age. Together with the family this axis forms the bipolar co-ordinate system in which life in this epoch is situated. This can be illustrated in an ideal-typical longitudinal section of an intact industrial world. Already in childhood, while still completely tied to the family, the child experiences the occupation as the key to the world through his or her father. Later, education remains related through all stages to the missing 'other' of the occupation. Adult existence is held completely under the sway of wage labor, not merely because of the demands work itself makes on time, but also because of the time spent outside work, beforehand and afterwards, in pondering over it and planning for it. Even 'old age' is defined by non-occupation. Old age begins where the world*



Paid work is, for many, an all encompassing aspect of their daily lives. Many of the decisions we make and life strategies we employ are predicated on employment, our own or others'. Indeed, if we believe the advertisers and marketing managers, we live in a 24/7 world which demands that information and services are available at our finger tips as and when needed. Whole sectors of industry, particularly the service industries, are dedicated to ameliorating the day to day living of a work rich, time poor society. A report by the European Foundation (Yeandle et al, 1999) highlighted the growth, across Europe, in employment in household services. Childcare, elder care, domestic maintenance and food and meal preparation are all witnessing large increases in their workforces. As employment makes more demands on time, and as the proportion of women entering the workforce continues to rise, traditional domestic chores are increasingly being 'out-sourced', that is, undertaken by individuals or companies either inside or out of the domestic environment. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the rapid increase in the availability of 'ready meals'. Whole aisles of supermarkets are dedicated to packaged meals, designed to reduce the time necessary for producing meals. Vegetables and salads are available ready washed and chopped and individually packaged, reducing the effort expended by the consumer and opening up whole new areas of employment for the job seeker. Contrasting starkly with this, is the increasing isolation and marginalisation of the long term unemployed and economically inactive. Since the mid 1980s the number of economically inactive claiming non-work related benefits including Incapacity Benefit has increased dramatically and in 2003 the numbers of claimants on non-active benefits outnumbered those on unemployment related benefits by almost three to one.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 2.7 million people of working age currently receive incapacity benefits because of a health condition or disability. This is 6.5% of the working age population, rising to almost 15% in the most affected local authority areas in the North West and South Wales. Source Incapacity Benefit Green Paper, Department for Work and Pensions, 2003

## **A post industrial society?**

Concerns over increasing unemployment have existed since the early twentieth century with the Great Depression and the increasing advances in technology which have rendered many trades (and workers) redundant. Some sociologists argued that the late twentieth century represented the advent of post-industrial society, (Abrams 1982, Bell 1973) in which the growth in new technological institutions marked a departure from the industrial society with towns, areas and even inhabitants defined by their industries. In post-industrial society, it was argued, relationships would be based on interpretative activities, with individuals living in communities which did not reflect their occupation but merely served their immediate needs. According to Bell (1973), traditional society had given way to one characterised by new technology and institutions which came about with the growth in the white collar and service sectors of the 1950s. Touraine (1974) stated that new forms of work organisations were shaping society, with life being moulded around emerging areas of employment. As traditional forms of employment were disappearing, also disappearing were the traditional forms of community where areas and their inhabitants were characterised by the main forms of local industry.

A contemporary of Touraine, Braverman (1974) in his key text, *Labour and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* developed a Marxist economic critique of the development of new technology in the workplace and its impact on workers' roles and responsibilities. His definition of monopoly capital saw small firms being taken over by large monopolistic capitalist organisations, globalisation in an earlier form. By concentrating market power in a small number of very large firms, monopoly capital could exert influence over workers, working practices, and whole markets. Control of production processes was placed in the hands of technical and professional staff who did not work directly in production but, rather, were employed to control and administer it, developing processes and practices to speed up production, making it less labour intensive, removing much of the autonomy of skilled workers, thus leading to a gradual 'deskilling' of the workforce whilst creating a more profitable system of production. It was here, in this middle layer of management, that Braverman identified the key threat to workers' autonomy and security. Technology itself was not to be feared but

the methods employed to utilise it were. For Braverman, the key management process embodying his concerns was Taylorism or scientific management, dealing with 'the fundamentals of the labour process and control over it'.

Braverman has been criticised from a number of perspectives. Friedman (1977) argues that Braverman idealised the relative autonomy of workers prior to the twentieth century. He states that Braverman tried to homogenise the working class, failing to acknowledge that many changes to working practices did not follow the strict guidelines of scientific management (the breaking down of skilled jobs into routinised, repetitive tasks) but rather, more often, were the result of ad hoc, low level management decisions. In addition, Braverman failed to acknowledge the impact that new technologies had on the development of new technical and professional groups such as radiographers, structural and civil engineers and architectural technicians. As will be examined in later chapters, technological changes have had a major impact on the ways in which the professionals under consideration have been able to develop their knowledge base, structure their work and balance their home and work commitments.

### **The role of knowledge within the labour market**

Bell (1973) expected that post-industrial society would be characterised by knowledge centred systems based upon flexible specialisation, ideally suited to the 'knowledge rich' professions. New technology would encourage greater flexibility and movement within the labour market, helped by the growth in a differentiated market which would be spurred on by increasingly fragmented consumer tastes. Such a viewpoint provided a positive picture for the more technical, specialised occupations, but did not offer such hope for the lower skilled and manual workers. Bell's predictions for the labour market do resonate with the current employment field. The advances in technology have created new areas of work but have also negated the need for other forms of employment. For example, with the widespread use of personal computers across all sectors of employment and amongst all occupational classifications, the need for large numbers of typists and clerical assistants has decreased. Perhaps what Bell could not foresee was the impact that the rapid increase in the service sector would have on employment opportunities and patterns.

Large numbers of low skilled and manual workers are now concentrated in this sector. From a different perspective, more recent research by Gallie (1998) views the introduction of technology with optimism. Gallie argued that continued developments in this field would upskill individual work tasks.

However, Gallie acknowledges that the upskilling of tasks could lead to work intensification. As discussed in chapter three, upskilling of tasks can lead either to the exclusion of lower skilled workers or, conversely, the usurpation of the higher skilled workers by increasingly technically competent, but lower paid manual staff. Similarly, Leadbetter (1999) stresses that certain bodies of knowledge have become the crucial currency in the future of work. However, unlike Bell, Leadbetter stresses that knowledge can only have a value when set in a market context. As with any other commodity, the value of knowledge is dependent upon demand.

The analyses of Bell (1972), Braverman (1974), Gallie (1988) and Leadbetter (1999), whilst spanning almost three decades, have clear similarities. All have identified the growing power and influence of knowledge rich workers in a labour market that is becoming increasingly reliant on technological innovations. If one takes this simple principle one step further, it could be argued that knowledge rich professionals (such as accountants and architects) should be able to drive the development of working practices to suit their personal needs. As this chapter has demonstrated, increasing numbers of workers are adopting more non-standard forms of working. Professionals' specialist levels of knowledge and the relative scarcity of such knowledge could act as a powerful bargaining chip in considerations of labour market practices. As the next two chapters will illustrate, such a theory is undermined by the role that organisational cultures and values play in determining the structure of professional markets. It is to a broader consideration of the literature concerning non standard working practices within the professions that this thesis now turns.

### Non standard working within the professions: accountancy and architecture

This chapter draws on the detailed examination of non-standard working practices discussed in chapter one. It comprises a further consideration of theories of non-standard working within the professions and outlines the key areas to be developed further in the empirical chapters six and seven. The preceding chapter focused on working practices, work patterns and developments within the structure of the labour market. Key areas of interest emerging from the review included issues concerning the work life balance debate and general reviews of the impact of non-standard working on skill development, training opportunities, career progression and the development of professional knowledge. As well as providing a theoretical base for my empirical research, the literature review of non-standard working and in particular non-standard working in relation to the professions, has highlighted emerging areas of research including notions of time deviance, occupational and organisational closure and professional commitment.

Chapter one highlighted how the labour market is changing. Greater numbers of women are entering employment. The employment rate for women<sup>18</sup> stood at 70 per cent, an increase of three percentage points in eight years. Many of these women work part time, but a greater number are moving into full time or self employment. Increasing numbers of women are moving into the professions. Again, using Labour Force Survey data, the percentage of women in SOC 2&3<sup>19</sup> has increased from a fifth of women employed to a quarter. The professions continue to be heavily dominated by men, especially in the more senior positions. Analysis of my survey data, in chapter five, demonstrates, how, when one considers the older age cohorts of professionals, males dominate the senior positions. Much of the 'traditional'

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<sup>18</sup> Labour Force Survey, Spring quarter 2003, unadjusted

<sup>19</sup> SOC 2&3 represent professional occupations and associated professional and technical occupations. In 1993 the total proportion of employees in this sector stood at 19 per cent. This figure had risen to 26 per cent by 2003.

picture of the professions (and again I use this term guardedly) is dominated by highly skilled, full time, male employees, moving up a steady and clear career ladder. As will also be examined later, many of the notions of a professional, still prominent in the contemporary professional labour market, implicitly include a home based, female, partner.

Gender relations are historically, culturally and spatially structured. It is only a 'recent' phenomenon, within the last 200 years, which has seen the strict division of 'public' labour from 'private' home life and with it the strict divisions between male and female employment types. Non-standard working practices are only non-standard, relative to this labour market model. As Crompton and Harris (1998) state, in their examination of theories of occupational segregation:

*"The increasing participation of women in paid employment also led to a growing tide of criticism of those class schemes and class analyses which had conventionally taken the model of the (male) 'standard employee' as their template." (1998: 298).*

Sociological studies of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s continued to focus on a 'job model' of male labour market participation, that of employment determining the social position of men, compared with a 'gender model' for women, where their social positions and employment positions were determined by their family and gender roles. More recent analyses of women within the labour market (Jacobs 1997, Epstein et al 1999, Franks, 1999) have broadened their analyses of the labour market positions of women to take into account the mutually dependent nature of domestic and employment roles. This chapter examines the literature concerning non-standard working practices within the professions against this relatively recent model.

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### **Time deviance and non-standard working**

A number of researchers (Mennino 2002, Epstein op. cit., Barker 1998) have considered the development of non-standard working from the perspective of time deviance, that is, deviating from the norm of a full time, five day, working week. Their research has focused on how organisations and professions have

developed and practised closure around notions of a male, full time workforce and how such notions impede the development of non-standard working, predominantly female, employees. The research in this area has particularly focused on the childcare responsibilities of professionals (predominantly women) and the impact that such responsibilities have had on their career development and opportunities for promotion (Epstein op cit). The impact of career breaks and part time working on both male and female professionals' career development is a central element of the analysis of my empirical data.

Notions of working time and 'deviance' from full time working schedules and their impacts on professional development have emerged as a key element of the empirical research. The 'standard hours' of employment that are commonplace today are 'standard' for a small proportion of the labour force and are premised on traditional views of the labour market centred around full time employed males supported by non-working wives. Many of the traditional notions of 'commitment' to a profession are also based upon the employment of males supported by home based wives. Barker (1998), in an examination of women's careers within the Irish accountancy profession, found that many of the opportunities for informal career development, demonstrating commitment to the profession, were based around traditional male sporting activities such as golf and rugby and thus were effectively closed to female participation. Other more traditional forms of socialising included the 'dinner party circuit' usually involving a male accountant host supported by his wife.

Research including that by Barker and Epstein, op. cit. has highlighted that the development of the professions, including the increased membership of women within these professions, has not changed the strong belief in the need to demonstrate commitment, generally through long hours and after work socialising. The construction and reproduction of these professional values and mores have not reflected the reality of a greater number of females and un-partnered males within the professions' memberships. Jackson (1999) states,

*"the male dominated heterosexuality is routinely normalised."* (Jackson, ibid, para 6.5)

## **The perpetuation of a masculine culture**

The promotion and reproduction of a predominantly masculine culture manifests itself in a number of ways. Epstein (op. cit.) outlined how, in a number of US law firms, individuals' 'billable hours', those hours spent on client specific work, were included in company papers and circulated to all employees on a regular basis. The same information was also published in a national professional paper. As billable hours directly correlate with a company's income generation, employees were encouraged to commit themselves to long hours. The prospect of being scrutinised both by fellow employees and by professional peers outside the company proved a key driver to a long hours' culture. Thus a company's success and a professional's 'identity' were intertwined with a perception that commitment to a profession and professional ability were demonstrated by long hours and high visibility. Epstein's research highlighted how those who worked shorter or less standard working hours were perceived as less committed to their profession and the firm and as 'time deviant'. Their commitment to their organisation and profession was questioned. That they were defined as 'time deviant' or 'not committed', again implies an organisational and professional norm of full time, office based employment.

Developing this theme, Steir (2003) argues that organisational and cultural factors impact strongly on views about working hours. Within organisations, comparisons between countries show country specific cultural values that drive working practices. In countries with a high dependence upon the market for the provision of daily necessities, there is a greater reliance on longer working hours. In countries with closer family and kinship systems, reliance on the income from longer working hours is less evident. Other research contradicts this argument. Wharton (2002) found that organisational norms are highly influential in determining working practices. Global business practices and the role of a global company ideology will drive working arrangements. To counter the power of the global ideology, however, Wharton's research found that the national context does shape managers' and professionals' approaches to working practices. Wharton argues that with a low number of professional people working part time in the United Kingdom, it is likely that few managerial or professional workers will adopt part time working practices. This reluctance



to move towards a more flexible model of working within the professional labour market may be determined by the characterisation of the professional labour market as one of long hours, high office visibility and a predominantly male culture. The way in which this characterisation of professionals impacts on those who choose to adopt non-standard working practices is considered in depth in chapters six and seven.

Yeandle et al (2003), reporting on research into line managers' responses to requests for family friendly employment, found that, whilst at an organisational level, family friendly practices might be encouraged or at least endorsed, in practice, decisions concerning changes to working hours were left to line managers. The research found that line managers were more willing to endorse a request for flexible working if they felt that the employee had demonstrated a 'suitable' level of commitment to the firm or organisation. Thus organisational culture would play a part in the decision making process but final decisions would rest on individual interpretations of 'commitment to the job'. As will be demonstrated in the later, empirical, chapters, non-standard working is less common in the professions and thus organisational or management responses to requests for such working practices are heavily influenced by a idea of a 'two dimensional' professional, that of a work first, full time, and often male worker. As will also be illustrated in the later chapters, such responses, within the professions, to requests for non-standard working apply equally to male professionals requesting changes, as to females.

### **Working hours and occupation**

There is a strong relationship between hours worked and occupation. Women working part time were more likely to work in personal service occupations and sales. Duffield (2002) found that women working full time were four times more likely than their part time counterparts to be employed in managerial or senior official occupations and twice as likely to work in professional occupations. Dex (1995) found that women have suffered downward moves in their occupational level following a move to part time work (most often associated with a return to work after maternity leave). This relationship was first established using data from the 1980 women in employment survey (Martin and Roberts 1984). Part time positions were more likely to be located

in lower skilled areas of an occupation. McGivney (1994) found that women part timers were much more likely to be over qualified for their current position than both female and male full timers.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, part time working is still very much the exception within the professions. Studies of medicine, law and finance (Epstein, Crompton and Harris, op. cit.) have demonstrated that professional norms concerning working hours continue to focus on a full time model of employment. Choices for part time staff within professions are consequently somewhat constrained. Crompton's cross-national research into the medical profession (1997) demonstrated that women's choices concerning areas of specialism were often shaped by their future plans for partnering and children (a further discussion is included on page 47). Women were, therefore, less likely to choose high status specialisms, such as surgery, and opted instead for specialisms such as radiography or oncology which are less likely to involve weekend or evening work.

### **Employment practices and 'choice'**

The literature on the employment choices made by women, the role that family decisions play and the impact that this has on career progression and parity of opportunities and outcomes with male counterparts is considered alongside this study's empirical data in chapters six and seven. Arguments fall broadly into three camps; those relating to work first approaches to labour market progression; those concerned with the constrained choices faced by women in the labour market, and those examining the 'trade offs' made by women in

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<sup>20</sup> The level of qualifications of the population as a whole has been increasing over the past five years. In spring 1997 22 per cent of women had no formal qualifications. This compares with a rate of 17 per cent in spring 2002. Women as a group are still less likely to have formal qualifications than men, as older women are more likely to have no formal qualifications than their male counterparts. This difference should reduce over time as attainment levels equalise. Indeed, over the past five years, women have seen a faster rise than men in the numbers holding higher qualifications (NVQ level 3 or above). Women with higher qualifications are more likely to be employed than their lower level counterparts. Rates of employment of higher qualified men and women are broadly similar (85 per cent of women compared with 89 per cent of men). In addition, higher qualified women are more likely to hold more senior positions. This is also the case for women who work full time. The majority of women (93 per cent) are employees. Around 57 per cent of women work full time although this differs greatly by number and ages of dependent children, (Labour Force Survey, Spring Quarter, 2003).

order to reconcile their home and work commitments. From the 'work first' perspective, Hakim (1987, 1996 and subsequently) argues that many of the inequalities in male and female labour market experiences are due to the decisions that women make with regard to their career progression and caring responsibilities. Whilst this thesis is not intended to provide a full critique of Hakim's theories, her arguments do comprise a key element of the literature on women's labour market participation and are thus afforded, in this chapter, a detailed consideration. She argues that a significant number of women have made conscious decisions to place their home responsibilities above those of their work and that their slower career progression and weaker position in the labour market could be attributed not to gendered barriers and inequalities within the labour market, but rather to preferences and personal decisions made by individuals about balancing their home and work lives.

A number of other commentators have argued that the 'choices' made by men and women concerning domestic duties are still heavily constrained. Bianchi et al (2000) outlines three perspectives on gender divisions within household work: time availability; relative resources, and gender. The authors argue that gender ideology remains the most important determinant in the allocation of household tasks, with housework continuing to define and express gender relations within the household. Women are disadvantaged in the allocation of household tasks due to the perpetuation of ideas concerning appropriate male and female roles, (see also Hochschild, 1989).

Hakim disputes established theories of gendered segregation within the labour market, arguing that the differential labour market experiences of males and females can be attributed to the different degrees of human capital that they invest in their home and work lives, reflecting the neo-classical theories of labour market participation.

Neo-classical theories of labour market participation view the differences between female and male labour market progression as a result of differing levels of human capital. They argue that women, on the whole, are less likely to invest significant amounts of time in training and formal, work related qualifications and are thus less likely to progress as far as men in the labour market. In addition, interruptions to labour market participation, resulting from maternity leave, part time working, or career breaks also lessen the amount of

investment in human capital. Such theorists argue that occupational segregation is a result of decisions made at a household level concerning the optimum methods of balancing the differing workplace (economic) and domestic (social) commitments. When such a theory is applied to those working in the professions, however, the arguments concerning lower levels of human capital by women can be countered. At the time of entry into the profession (at trainee or assistant level) both male and female professionals will have had to invest similar levels of time or capital in their formal qualifications. Thus the differences between male and female labour market progression cannot simply be ascribed to lower levels of investment in human capital, nor can the decisions concerning methods of balancing home and work commitments.

Crompton and Harris *op. cit.* argue that the decisions women make regarding their home and work responsibilities are made within a heavily gendered work and home environment where women have traditionally been, and continue to be, the primary carers for their families. Describing the methods adopted by women as 'satisficing', and building on Chafetz and Hagan's earlier research (1996), they argue that women have to sacrifice parts of both their home and work lives in order to satisfy the demands of the other. In this way, women are able to reach a reasonably high level in respect of both goals rather than maximising one.

Another perspective on the methods adopted to balance home and work commitments is that of the work role 'trade off'. Barnett and Gareis (2000) develop this approach in their analysis of professionals and managers in the United States. They found that, in order to cut down on working commitments, some workers opt to give up aspects of their work remit, rather than restrict the time given to all existing areas of work. For some, this enables them to give up the more mundane tasks, for others it means that aspects of their work that offered value or personal fulfilment have to be relinquished. Thus despite gaining more time for non-work activities, some professionals felt great levels of distress at having had to decide on a 'trade-off' and were less satisfied with their working remit than when they were working longer hours. This also applied to professionals going for promotion who, often, in order to meet more managerial and administrative requirements, had to give up certain aspects of

their former role which they had found interesting or fulfilling, such as research or development (Barnett and Gareis, 2000).

### **A work first versus home first approach**

Kirkham and Loft (1993), in their consideration of the construction of the professional accountant, argued that the characterisation of the professional accountant was something essentially 'not female'. Developing this, they argue that the prevailing notion of a professional is one of a full time worker, whose commitment to their profession is demonstrated through long hours and a 'work first' approach to their lives. Consequently, those working part time are perceived as not committed to their working lives and are thus similar to their non-working peers.

Hakim has developed this theory through a series of analyses of labour market participation and, predominantly, women's varying levels of commitment to the labour market and home. Hakim (1996, 2002) argues that part time and shorter hours workers are similar, in their attitudes towards work and home, to the non-employed, predominantly female, population. She argues that the position of part time workers within the labour market is a result of their lower commitments to employment rather than to discriminatory practices towards them. Hakim contends that, since the Second World War, the proportion of women in the labour market (measured in full time equivalents) has not increased. However, her measurement equates two part time positions to one full time, thus not acknowledging that many part time positions are for longer than 20 hours per week. Hakim's arguments are based on women having a single relationship with the labour market, rather than a series of interactions which may be characterised by full time and part time periods of employment. Her arguments, centred on neo-classical, human capital theories of the economic drivers of labour market participation, stress that women make unconstrained choices regarding their positions in the labour market and that such choices are unfettered by social mores and values concerning childcare and domestic work.

It can be argued, however, that her analysis of part time and non-standard working fails to take account of the impact that life-stages and changing home

responsibilities can have on all members of the workforce. The part time home centred theory is open to much criticism. In a response to Hakim's broad generalisation of female part time workers, Ginn et al (1996) argued that part time working is as much a response to the joint commitments of labour market engagement and home life that most people face in modern society, as to a lower level of commitment to the labour market as a whole. They argued that the reason why part time workers were less likely to gain promotion or receive equal treatment was not their lower level of commitment but arose from the preferential treatment given to full time workers.

Further criticism of Hakim's analysis of women's positions within the labour market focuses on her assumption that the choice to work full or part time is purely objective and rational, unaffected by external economic and social considerations (Chafetz and Hagan 1996). These authors argue that due to heavily gendered patterns of both labour market participation and domestic labour, men can rationally have a family and full labour market engagement. Chafetz and Hagan (ibid.) developed the theory of '*satisficing*'<sup>21</sup>, that is, of individuals reaching a reasonably high level of attainment or satisfaction, in respect of both goals rather than maximising one or the other. This theory has been developed by Crompton moving it from the rational choice, individualistic, approach to one shaped by social mores and 'intermediate social structures' (Crompton 1998). For women, trying to combine both home and paid employment requires more of a strategic approach.

There are still pre-set social norms concerning caring and the role of a mother within childrearing, as well as the biological determinants of pregnancy and the early weeks of childcare which impact on the decisions made and actions taken. As will be examined in detail in chapters six and seven, respondents to my research demonstrated a number of different approaches to reconciling the demands of their professional and domestic lives.

In my research, I found that the strategies adopted by professional employees, both men and women, to combine their public (work) and private (family) lives

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<sup>21</sup> A term first used by Chafetz and Hagan, (1996), more recently used by Crompton and Harris (1997) to highlight the approaches adopted by many women to balance their home and work commitments. The term refers to the sacrifices made in terms of both career and home to satisfy both their demands.

varied greatly. They are not, as Hakim argues, determined by following either a strongly male model or a female model of attachment but rather are determined by a desire to combine both responsibilities to a satisfactorily high standard.

Hakim's theories have changed over time. In her work on the role of preference theory in explaining women's participation in the labour market, Hakim has developed a theory of 'female models' of labour market participation. She argues that there have been a number of defining historical as well as social factors in women's social and economic history (the development of the contraceptive pill, increasing numbers of women gaining higher level qualifications), that have enabled women to develop greater links with the labour market. She reinstates personal preferences as an important factor in women's labour market behaviour and states that attitudes, values and preferences are becoming more important in work life balance choices. From having two contrasting models of female labour market participation; the work first versus the home first female, Hakim has developed a lifestyle preference model comprising three categories: home centred, adaptive and work centred women. Home centred women view family life and childcare as priorities, adaptive women are likely to have to reconcile the differing demands of work and home, with one often taking precedence. Adaptive women are likely to have invested in education and qualifications but have not continued to invest, thus reducing their human capital. Work centred women are predominantly childless, who have made, and continue to make a large investment in qualifications and education. Again, whilst this thesis is not solely concerned with critiquing Hakim's theories, one can argue that, female professionals, who have made and continue to make investments in their education and training can as equally be 'adaptive' as work centred. Hakim continues to equate full time, work centred and thus predominantly male, models of labour market participation with commitment. As such her preference theory fails to capture adequately the extent to which 'adaptive' women are committed both to their professional lives and to their home lives.

## Professional attachment

Attachment to an employer is rationally determined, based on 'neo classical models of employment mobility' (McDuff and Mueller, 2000:90). Selection of an occupation or profession is often determined much more by a sense of vocation or 'calling'. Therefore it is likely, argue, McDuff and Mueller, that in times of labour market buoyancy, professionals are likely to move across employers, in order to seek their optimal working conditions, rather than out of their profession. In addition, professional values are an important determining factor in considerations of professional attachment. Leading on from this, it is possible to argue that professionals, rather than leave their profession, when encountering, for example, barriers to non-standard working, may instead move to the periphery of the profession, for example into lecturing or specialist journalism. Peripheral working, maintaining links with the profession, is determined (in Mueller and McDuff's work) as a preferred option to professional change. This is indeed reflected in my empirical evidence, explored further in chapters six and seven.

Crompton argues that the selection of occupation determines a woman's personal and social responsibilities (family and gender roles) rather than her labour market experiences being determined by those roles (1998: 300 & 311).<sup>22</sup> Her studies of accountants and doctors found that the medics, having selected their profession, were more likely to consider family and home commitments before deciding upon a specialism, whilst accountants were more likely to work full time and use full time childcare and other forms of domestic help. This pattern also emerged in my research.

From a slightly different perspective, Mennino (2002) focused on three dimensions of gender in her analysis of how workers 'trade-off' job and family roles and commitments. The research found that men and women experience equal amounts of job and family conflict but that women are more likely to adapt jobs to suit family and home responsibilities. Mennino also reported that, in many organisations, non-standard working for women was deemed more 'acceptable' and therefore was more readily agreed to than similar working practices for male employees.

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<sup>22</sup> See also earlier discussion on page 41



In her study of the varying labour market strategies of women employed in the medical and finance professions, Crompton et al (op. cit.) found that the medical profession has a large number of women working on a part time basis. However, the study found that women within medicine had often made early decisions concerning their preferred specialism with future family formation in mind. It is unusual therefore to find high numbers of women working within surgery or other high prestige positions. The study found that greater numbers of women specialised in radiography, gynaecology and ontology, specialisms that were generally clinic based and operated on a Monday to Friday basis, with little demand for evening or weekend work. McDuff and Mueller (2000) argue that, due to a strong sense of professional calling, professionals are more likely to face 'relegation' of responsibilities and status, when trying to balance home and work, than leave their profession. In part, this could be explained by considerations of the human capital already invested in professional education and training.

Within Crompton's research, women professionals in the finance sector were, conversely, less likely to have taken future family commitments into consideration when choosing their career paths. The finance professionals were more likely to utilise formal domestic and childcare services in order to meet their workplace commitments. The high incidence of formal childcare and domestic support amongst accountants was also evidenced in my research. Returning to Kirkham and Loft's (1993) analysis of the development of the professional accountant, it could be argued that the pervading culture of the professional accountant is highly masculine, comprising long hours, high office visibility and a strong adherence to a work first model.

Smircich (1983) highlighted how some studies of organisations perceive culture as part of an organisation's structure, that is, as something an organisation 'has' and which is viewed as largely unalterable. In short, in many organisations, the dominant culture has been reified. From this standpoint, organisational culture can be seen as largely divorced from wider societal dynamics, and as a structure, immune to external influences and thus leading its members to alter their behaviour to suit 'it'. Smircich argues that a more useful approach is to view organisational culture as comprising a number of intertwining sets of values and opinions. The culture of an organisation, as

well as developing from individuals' norms and values, also develops as a result of interactions between its various members and thus is a dynamic both of changes within and without the organisation.

Hochschild (1997) asserts that rather than working longer hours to satisfy economic needs, cultural and social changes have produced a society where work has replaced home as the primary supportive environment. She also contends that more women are working, not just out of economic necessity, but also out of personal gratification in a more public role. Her analysis however does not draw out sufficiently the degree to which working hours are determined by the need for economic reward. She argues that the long hours are driven primarily by a commitment to the company and the sense of value that work engenders rather than economic reward.

Hochschild's (1997) analysis downplays the role of workplace culture in individual decisions. Other research (Brandth and Kvande, 2001) highlights that where flexible alternatives are available but are dependent upon an individually led approach rather than a management approach, they are more likely to be viewed as 'deviant'. The role of supportive management and an organisational endorsement of non-standard working practices is explored further in analysis of the empirical data in chapters six and seven.

Key life stages also have a critical impact on working hours and career choices, (an area developed in later chapters). Here, the term key life stages is used to refer to periods such as: entry to the labour market; partnering, parenthood<sup>23</sup> and childcare; other forms of care, and approaches to retirement. An important criticism of Hakim's work, made for example by Hochschild (1997), and discussed later in this study, is that her theories are based upon a static approach to women's interactions with the labour market. As is demonstrated in my research, Hakim's theories have paid scant attention to the fact that, for the majority of employed women, their working lives are characterised by a number of different interactions with the labour market.

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<sup>23</sup> From data from the Office for National Statistics, the average (mean) age at childbearing is increasing. Large changes in the number of births from the 1950s to 1980s were partly the result of changes in the ages at which women gave birth. Average (mean) age of mothers at childbirth fell from 28.7 years for women born in 1920 to a low of 26.0 years for women born in the mid-1940s. Since then average age at childbirth has risen and is projected to increase to over 29 years for women born in the late 1970s onwards. (Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>)

## Professional monopolisation and closure

Witz (1992), in her detailed feminist critique of the professions sees occupational closure as one of the key methods of professional monopolisation. As will be examined in greater depth in the next chapter, the establishment and stratification of a group goes hand in hand with a monopolisation of ideal and material goods and opportunities. Therefore only certain professionals are able to practice, e.g. law and medicine. The market is restricted and stratified according to prescribed rules, norms and forms of occupational closure. Longer established and more dominant professional occupations have formerly emphasised their status by insisting that their members were gentlemen, thereby reinforcing their professional status and power as well as underlining the importance of gender. The following chapter provides a more detailed discussion of occupational and professional closure and considerations of the social construction of a professional. From a perspective of viewing the process of professionalisation as a strategy of occupational closure, it can be argued that the closure techniques adopted to maintain the exclusiveness of professions are implicitly, if not explicitly, gendered. Within the architecture profession, the extended period of professional training (seven years) followed by several years' work at a junior level, coincides with the most common years for women to start a family. Architects who go to university at 18 will qualify (achieve Part III of the RIBA accredited examinations) at 25 years, before then being employed at a junior level for at least three to four years. Whilst the average age of women having their first child is increasing, the key years of family formation can be seen to overlap with those most associated with professional development and career progression and promotion. As a self employed joint director of a practice stated:

*"I think that's why architects mainly have their children later. I mean I had mine when I was 34 and 39, you've got to get on the ladder first. Well you've got a choice, you either take a break earlier and hope you get back in, or you leave it till later and then you'll only get a few months off anyway. The difference is, architecture is the lowest paid profession and if we've got to pay a nanny for childcare out of our nett. salary and that can take up to 70 per cent of our salary....Average salary is £24,000 for an architect, a senior architect might be on £30,000 to £35,000 after 10 years experience. If you've done your 5 years study and 2 years [qualifying], you're only on £22,000 to £23,000 which is quite low*

*compared with other professions and it goes up really slowly then and it's really only when you have your own practice that you're in control of that."*  
(Female architect, mid forties, works full time in own practice, two children).

Whilst the key stages of development within architecture are explicit and thus argued by senior members of professional bodies, as accepted by all, they implicitly cause problems for women wanting to establish both a career and a family.

Barker and Monks (1998), in their analysis of professional development in the Irish accountancy profession, examined how women were excluded from certain opportunities for career progression due to a lack of social capital. Women accountants were less likely to engage in leisure activities that were perceived to confer status on the participant, including membership of golfing and rugby clubs. The authors argued that such limited access to social capital prevented women accountants from progressing in their careers to the same extent as their male peers. The activities that women accountants engaged in were more likely to be associated with the domestic sphere and thus had lower levels of social capital attached. Epstein et al (1999) considered the different opportunities for promotion for male and female US attorneys. Female attorneys who chose to shorten their working hours due to home commitments were perceived to have less social capital and commitment to work than their, usually, male colleagues who shortened their working hours to meet community or voluntary commitments. Such commitments, including membership of charitable boards, were perceived to confer important levels of social capital both for the individual and for the company.

It is therefore evident, drawing both on the evidence considered in chapter one and that discussed in this chapter, that the development of non-standard practices across the labour market has both a differential impact and different level of take up, depending upon the sector or labour force that is under consideration. Whilst the numbers of those adopting non-standard working practices are increasing, and the sectors in which such practices are adopted has widened, employees in some occupations, and notably the professions, are still limited in their ability to 'deviate' from a standard norm.

This chapter has highlighted that those working in the professions have to deal not only with organisational norms concerning 'suitable' working practices but also with professional norms. Ideas of professional commitment, established career paths, a male culture of long working hours, and a work first approach, are all issues that professionals have to face when considering moving to non-standard forms of employment. Chapters six and seven examine the strategies adopted by some professionals when faced with making the move from 'standard' to non-standard working methods. Before moving on to a consideration of how professionals are reconciling the often competing demands and expectations of work and home, it is important to place the emerging findings within the broader context of the development of the professions and the system of professionalisation, and this is the focus of chapter 3.

### **A consideration of professional development**

This chapter aims to place the professions, and in particular the two professions that are the focus of this thesis, within a broader theoretical framework. In it, I clarify my working definition of a profession, before moving on to consider how the professions of accountancy and architecture developed and continue to develop, examining their external relationships with the state and the market and their internal relationships, with, sometimes competing, intra-professional groups. In this way the chapter will develop some of the concepts introduced in chapters one and two. In particular it will illustrate how changes in wider market dynamics impact on the development and structure of professional groups, the working practices within them, and professionals themselves. This chapter will also consider how individuals within the professions act to maintain their status and prestige. It will draw upon the two professions of accountancy and architecture to develop some of the concepts further.

Chapter two discussed the development of non-standard working practices within the more highly skilled areas of the labour market. In particular, it looked at issues arising from 'traditional' notions of labour market attachment and offered an early consideration of professional development and closure. This chapter will examine how the 'systems' of professional development have evolved and in particular how the structure and composition of the professions of accountancy and architecture have developed in line with changes in the wider labour market.

### **Theories of professionalisation**

The sociology of the professions has focused on three key themes: trait theories, that is, what professions do, and how they are defined; functions of development, picking out common structures and examining whether such structures can be characterised as professions (functionalism); and theories of dominance and power, that is, how professions monopolise certain areas of work and protect them in order to maintain their status and power. The role of

the market and professions' relationships with the market are key to these theories.

Theories of the development of the professions draw upon a number of schools of thought. Some theories are located in debates about market forces and market development, with proponents of these views arguing that the development of professional groups has been driven by the demand of potential customers for specialist services (Larson, 1977). Others argue that professional groups themselves have developed defensively to protect their skills and services from competing occupations.

This thesis draws on theories of dominance and power, with a particular focus on a consideration of economic rationalisation, giving emphasis to demand side theories but not solely driven by them (Larson, 1977). I develop the argument that, as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the resulting emergence of a monied middle class, the services of particular skilled workers were called upon to protect the new found wealth of some parts of society and to service their social and economic needs. The growth in the professions of architecture and accountancy, both during and after this period, is an expression of this growing demand for professional services. In an attempt to protect their market, the increasing numbers of professional workers created structures and bodies that could be used to restrict access to certain occupations and thereby develop and reinforce methods of occupational closure<sup>24</sup>. By placing restrictions on access to such occupational groups, professional bodies limited supply, and ensured demand for a limited pool of expertise.

In development, this argument draws on the neo-Weberian theories of Larson (1977) and Macdonald (1995). As will become clear, I take the argument further by examining not only the external relationships of professional groups with the market for their services, but also the internal relationships of different groups within professions. This chapter provides the basis upon which to consider, in later chapters, how economic rationalisation determines not only

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<sup>24</sup> Drawing on a Weberian analysis of the professions, the term occupational closure refers to those methods by which some occupational groups limit entrance to their group. Strategies for closure may be based on, amongst other things, sex, age, ethnicity or qualifications (Larson, 1977, Murphy, 1988 and Witz, 1992)

the remit for these professions' activities but also their working practices and structures. I will thus extend Larson's theory of a 'professional project' to explore the strategies and methods employed by those professionals adopting non-standard working practices, in order to provide a consideration of how they have developed their own, personal, professional projects.

In examining the development of these professions, I take both a narrative and an analytical approach; using narrative to tell the story of the development of the selected professions, whilst placing these developments within a broader theoretical framework.

### **Accountancy and architecture: case studies of professions**

Any examination of the professions or of professionalism is inevitably subjective. Abbott states that the early trait based theories of professional development were criticised for being heavily influenced by individual prejudices (1988: 7). If an observer felt that, for example, social work was not a profession they could identify traits that demonstrated just that<sup>25</sup>. In choosing to study accountancy and architecture, I have selected two professions that meet a set of criteria which I consider define them as professions. The criteria used include that they have: a defined and specialised knowledge base; a long period of training; and a clear career structure within the profession and across organisations. I have then decided from which perspective to examine the professions, drawing both on those texts that I feel best encapsulate the system of professionalisation and also on evidence that has come from my empirical research with professionals and from my secondary data analysis. My underlying aim has been to examine how professionals' career development was affected by non-standard working practices. In doing this, I was already making an assessment of the professional groups, seeing those working within them as powerful, as more likely to be autonomous, and, as having power and choice over their working arrangements. I have already

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<sup>25</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of trait theories see Johnson (1972). Abbott (1988) argues that whilst objectively, a number of occupations outwardly displayed similar intellectual disciplines (he uses the example of doctors and vehicle mechanics), subjectively, people (and here Abbott is referring to society in general) do not want to afford an occupation such as mechanics with the same status and 'dignity' accorded to medicine.



defined the two occupational groups I am studying as professions, without determining empirically whether in fact their structure, actions and relationships with the wider society and market characterise them as professionals or otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

I also need to make clear at the outset that, unlike some analyses of the professions (e.g. Parkin (1974) and Freidson (1986)), I am not analysing the professions from the perspective of the beneficiaries of professional services, nor am I examining the power structures and processes within the professions per se. My analysis of the professions aims to provide an illustration of how certain specialised occupational groups form, develop and change according to external factors such as the dynamics of the labour market. I am interested in how the members of those professional groups are able to react to such external factors and how, in turn, the profession as a whole then treats them. To explore this, I need to ascertain how the structure within which they operate impacts on their abilities to make autonomous decisions about working patterns and career development. Here I am concerned with questions such as: how have rules and regulations developed?; and what influences do the professional bodies have on the structure and development of the professions? In order to answer such questions and to examine professions in general and architecture and accountancy in particular, it is useful to consider the role of occupational and social closure. Such a perspective includes an examination of the role of power within the professional structure and how power and notions of status impact on a profession's ability to endorse or support non-standard working practices.

## **Introduction to the theoretical framework**

In considering the professions from a historical viewpoint, from the origins of their development, their relationships with the state and the economy and their methods of forging a professional identity, I have been drawn to Weberian explanations of professional formation, which focus on the historical

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<sup>26</sup> I am not the only one to adopt this approach. Johnson (1972) outlines a number of theorists who have also rejected the trait theory and have moved to a more contextual consideration of the factors that led to occupations organising themselves in such a way to be determined as a profession.

development of the professions, the role of social stratification and the importance of social mobility. Weber's analysis (explored in, amongst others Larson 1977, Macdonald 1995) draws attention to the way in which groups with interests in common act to limit their membership and secure an advantage over a market or over a body of knowledge at the expense of other excluded groups. This approach enables students of the professions to develop an historical perspective on their chosen profession and adds greatly to an empirical study of professions.

Weber's analysis of the development of social groups focuses on three inter-linking themes: power, including economic power; status honour; and class<sup>27</sup>. In a recent examination of the development of the professions, MacDonald (1995) selects these three themes and explores them further in order to examine how they underpin the development of the professional project. Macdonald surmises that society can be seen as individuals pursuing their own interests, with this activity generating more or less collectively conscious groups, defined by their pursuit of a common set of ideas. Such social groups engage in practices of 'social closure'. To further their own interests, they attempt both to exclude some from their group, and to usurp the privileges of others. Such processes are intended to provide the members of the groups with a variety of rewards; social (status honour), economic or power.

### *Status Honour*

Weber argues that social structures or classes cannot be analysed or categorised purely in terms of capital (owners) and labour (non owners). Rather, Weber defines a third category whose members play an important role in the development of modern society. This third category exists by 'virtue of social values and evaluation' (Macdonald 1995:43); status groups. Some rewards, including social power or 'status', derive from notions of their incumbents' social value or worth, rather than from any consideration of their monetary value.

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<sup>27</sup> These themes are discussed in detail in his own writings. For my account, I have used Weber's work as presented in translation in the works of Gerth and Wright Mills (1948).

This is an important aspect of any consideration of the professions.

Professional literature (Parsons 1954, McDuff 2000) highlights the importance to many professionals, of a sense of vocation or 'calling'. As is illustrated in the later empirical chapters, some respondents to my survey speak of wanting to practise within their professional field because of a sense of vocation, or a wish to apply specialised skills irrespective of end salary. For social honour to be of any importance, it must both have value (for example confer status and influence on its holders) and be aspired to. It can be short lived unless it is recognised and supported by immediate and wider communities. Unless the wider, lay population recognises the factors that contribute to social honour or social standing, it cannot be maintained. Because a professional's skills are often intangible, it is vital to maintain the social esteem in which a profession is held in order to ensure and possibly enhance social honour. In the same way, professional groups therefore have to consider the methods needed to both secure their place in the economy and society and also to maintain it. As Macdonald (op. cit.) states:

*"The professional project has as its objectives the securing, enhancement and **maintenance** of the social and economic standing of its members, and thus the achievement of a relative advantage in the structure of inequality."* (Macdonald op. cit: 36, my emphasis).

Professional bodies can only exist if potential members recognise the body's value, its existence and each others' rights to be members. In addition, those professionals or para-professionals unable to gain admittance to certain professional societies need to continue to desire admittance in order to maintain and reinforce the value and status of such groups. The perceived value and thus monopolisation of certain positions, or 'positional property' as Murphy terms it (Murphy 1984: 549), reinforces the struggle both inter and intra status groups. The identification of a set of groups, argues Macdonald, provides clarification of a problem area within Marxist analysis which requires all social classes to be defined solely in terms of their relationships with economic power.

## *Power*

In this way, social or status honour runs counter to objective understandings of economic rationalisation. Whilst professional markets have developed alongside the economic market, some professionals' actions do not fit neatly with an economically rational model. That is, the investment in education and training necessary to enter some professions will not, always, be rewarded in a financial sense, such as economic power, but rather, in the more intangible sense of bestowing honour or status on the individual. Whilst from a Weberian perspective one can argue that economically derived power is not necessarily a central component of social closure or status groups, it does enable its 'owners' to acquire goods and services which contribute to certain forms of status. Thus if we argue, as is illustrated later in this chapter, that knowledge is a centrally important component of professions, the economic power to acquire that knowledge is important. Indeed, Larson (1977) sees the rise of professionalism as a product of capitalist economic rationalisation. Either directly or indirectly, Larson argues that the majority of professions are incorporated into the production of surplus value<sup>28</sup> (1977:215).

Weber asserts that the basis of legal order influences the distribution of power. He argues that power can be defined as the ability of a group within a group to exert their influence, even against opposition from other members. The structure of any organisation or profession can influence the distribution of power, economic or otherwise, within it.

## *Class*

Economic power remains important but is not the central component of all social classes. Rather, Weber argues that property or the lack of it, are 'the basic categories of all class situations.' (Weber, in Parkin, 1982: 91). Gerth and Wright Mills (1948) define class situations as those situations where a number of people have in common a specific causal component (property, wealth, specific skills), represented under market conditions. The power of

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<sup>28</sup> That is, value over and above that which the professional receives in exchange for their labour. For wage labourers, their labour often has a 'market' value, paid as a weekly wage. In general, however, their labour has a higher value to their employers. By introducing changes to working practices, including technological changes, employers can secure greater levels of value from their workers than they pay in wages. Surplus value is therefore the residual sum, once wages have been accounted for.

such classes comes in their ability to compete in the market place for highly valued goods or services. The market is monopolised by those with excess surplus value (see footnote 28). Weber argues that there is a further level of disaggregation of the class situation. This depends entirely on the type of property that is owned. Within the field of the professions, one of the key components of their class or economic situation is the professionals' ownership of distinct bodies of knowledge. The way in which the knowledge is protected, used and reproduced is key to the maintenance of the profession's position within the class situation. In this way, there will always be an element of struggle or conflict between owners of similar bodies of knowledge. As outlined later, the continued power that professions hold is due, in part, to their attempts, as communal groups, to maintain and protect this body of knowledge. From the perspective of my study, it could be argued that the futures of the professional classes and their 'professional projects' are undermined by movements away from communal practices, including in the case of my research, communal definitions of working practices.

### **The professional project**

Drawing on the above consideration, Larson (1977) describes the way in which professions have developed and organised themselves to attain market power as a form of 'professional project'. Rather than viewing professions as static entities with given positions in occupational hierarchies, Larson acknowledges professions' close relationships with the market and with state structures. Such relationships result in professions' members having to continually defend their positions against market changes and state dynamics. Larson develops her conceptualisation of the professional project with close references to Weber's thoughts on stratification and economic and social order, thus contextualising the place of professions within society and acknowledging their vulnerability to market and economic changes. I have developed this approach further by using Larson's concept of a professional project to examine how it is applied within as well as between professions to create forms of occupational segregation. Such factors are not to the fore of Larson's analysis, which focused on the external rather than internal processes of professionalisation. I have further examined Larson's focus on the marketability of professions and

their monopoly of specific skill sets and knowledge bases and applied this to an examination of internal professional structures, examining how two professions have chosen to approach market and state moves towards a more flexible labour market. Are professions' levels of marketability undermined by a greater move towards non-standard working? Do full time, permanent staff have a monopoly on the maintenance and application of specific skill sets? Are professions a homogeneous set of specialist workers or do levels of segregation exist within professions, for example between full time 'core' workers and non-standard 'periphery' professionals?

### **Professions and economic capital**

Friedson (1986) also places professions within the market, arguing that their existence is dependent upon economic capital. He defines professions as 'market projects', constituting and controlling a market for their expertise. In this way, their relationship with the economy and the market is very strong. The existence of their profession is dependent upon market demand and the resulting market value attached to the profession. The market economy shelters and monopolises the services of the professions, imbuing them with a notional value not determined directly by costs of materials or by physical products manufactured as a result of labour. The status of the professional group (which, paradoxically is strengthened by its perceived distance from the market) creates notional ideas of value and worth which transcend purely monetary exchanges. Despite this, status groups and the monopolies of status groups are not immune from the impacts or whims of the market. The rules and values that underpin professional groups, often defined as regulations or standards, are threatened by subtle and not so subtle changes to core aspects of a profession's identity. Nor are professions immune from the changing nature of the state. Across time, state policies change, and with these changes come different relationships with various stakeholders, including professionals. Duffy (1998), in his examination of the changing nature of the architecture profession in the twentieth century, documents how, following the second world war, a general political climate of consensus and strong state support for the growing public sector protected the professions from the vagaries of politics and the market. This consensus was broken with the

emergence of the New Right. These changes impacted both on the way in which the profession operated at practice level, and on how it functioned as a professional group. Ideologies that supported stronger links with the market and a stronger emphasis on the private over the public sector impacted on the architectural profession. Such impacts included a challenge to the protected term 'architect' and the removal of an agreed minimum fee framework.

The expansion of other occupations' work remits to include those formerly seen as one of a particular profession can lead to changes in demand for services and changes in the market's perception of the role of certain professional groups. For example, over the past 20 years, builders and surveyors have moved into areas of domestic design that were previously the realm of architects, including small scale extensions and renovations. Research by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) found that many prospective customers are now unaware that architects undertake this type of work and often rely on it for principal forms of income. As other occupations encroach on a component of a professional field, the message to the market can become confused, reducing demand for professionals' services and undermining the value and status of certain professional groups. This theoretical approach to the development of the profession needs to be set against a consideration of the historical development, to use Larson's term, of a 'professional project'. To consider the process of professionalisation further, it is useful to analyse a specific profession.

### **The formation of a professional project: the case of accountancy**

The professional history of accountancy is relatively recent when compared with the histories of other professions such as medicine or law. The industrial revolution, a period defined in this thesis as one of economic rationalisation, led to a growth in the professional middle class in part through increased access to education. The development of closer relationships with an emerging market changed the character of existing professions and led to the formation of additional professional groups. Both Friedson and Larson acknowledge the centrality of the market in the development of the professions. Using Larson's model of the professional project, the formation of professional groups or associations forms an early step in a move towards the

monopolisation and regulation of a profession. The monopolisation is furthered via means of standardising and controlling a knowledge base, thus restricting access to this knowledge and the subsequent production of the producers (Larson 1977, in Macdonald 1995:11). In order to secure clients and income, new professionals became increasingly exposed to market economics and to the realities of competition. The industrial revolution witnessed the advent of entrepreneurs who, with surplus income, were able to purchase the services of the professions.

The development of the accountancy profession can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century when demand for accountants accelerated as a result of increases in bankruptcy cases following the industrial revolution. In order to counter competition from solicitors in the field of bankruptcy and to control their market, accountants formed themselves into professional bodies, restricting access to the profession. The profession evolved from the growth in large national organisations, stimulated, in part by advances in technology. For example, the industrial revolution led to a greater centralisation of production in large factory based operations. Analysis by Cooper and Hopper (1990) highlights that, because non-accounting firms grew in size, their accountancy needs grew and, with the advent of shareholders, greater levels of reporting and independent audits were needed. In time, the movement towards a professional system of audit further enhanced the professions' power and prestige, by creating a formal link between the profession and the state via a regulated system of financial reporting. The needs of a modern economy to have adequate financial control of its industries, administered in part through the accounting profession, gave the professional group added prestige. Such an analysis reinforces the profession's view that accounting serves the public interest. The self-regulation of accounting practice by professional bodies is;

*"founded upon a commitment to act independently of any sectional interests."* (Willmott, 1990 p315).

This element of the professional project, emphasising the common good of professional services, further strengthened the accounting profession's position. Willmott contends that, as accountants and accountancy are central elements of most modern institutions, the profession naturally serves the



public's interest. The granting of Royal Charters reinforces this view. Recipients of the Charter are expected to work within the public's interest. Many accountants see their role as that of independent scrutineer, ensuring that company returns are fair and true, providing an accurate account, to the public, of annual business<sup>29</sup>. Such an analysis, in isolation, gives insufficient attention to the social and economic processes surrounding the formation of the accountancy profession. The profession developed within a specific period, as the result of competing market forces, with both solicitors and accountants eager to provide bankruptcy services. The public did not demand these services, rather they were demanded by creditors of failing companies who represented commerce rather than society. The colonisation of bankruptcy services by the accountancy profession pointed to a form of occupational closure practised by a profession keen to protect its market, rather than to an attempt, by an occupational group, to provide financial services in the general public's interest (see amongst others Robson 1994). It is therefore hard to equate the development of the accountancy profession only with the serving of public need. Accountancy is not the only profession that justifies its status within society by its serving and protecting of the public's interests. Other occupations;

*".....seek to attain or affirm the idea that their existence is the outcome of a social contract between an occupational group and the 'public'.....This narrative suggests that in return for an undertaking to regulate their members in ways that serve the public interest, the occupation gains an advantage (and sometimes a monopoly) in the market for providing a service or services to society." (Robson et al, 1994)*

### **Guardians of the public good**

Professions are able to maintain a specific place within society by asserting their effectiveness as guardians of the public good. This is done through the public's estimation of their honour and social value. Their privileged position is maintained by professionals acting as gatekeepers to others' entry to (and

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<sup>29</sup> In this respect the role of the profession can be seen to reflect the views of Parsons (1954) in his assertion of professions being defined by their 'service to their client group'.

therefore other's exclusion from) the profession and by self-regulating their practices. In recent years the accounting profession has had to justify, more vocally, its right to self regulate. The large scale pension fund mismanagement and mis-selling of endowment policies in the 1980s led to a general questioning of the efficacy of professional self regulation. The changing nature of the state and its relationship with professional bodies led to changes in the organisation and practices of the accountancy profession. To counter the growing unease, both within and without government, surrounding professional self-regulation, a number of member bodies started to produce annual statements of practice, recommendations of good practice and guidelines for professional conduct. Robson (1994) argues that such publication was undertaken in order that professional bodies might maintain their role in providing regulation by the profession rather than external regulation of the profession and thus maintain their social and economic position and autonomy.

### **An interactionist theory of professional formation**

Robson's argument can be used to develop Larson's interactionist theory of professional formation and maintenance. Larson (1977) argues that the professions' close relationships with the market and the state mean that they constantly have to defend their position against market changes and state dynamics. Thus her concept of a 'professional project' is amply demonstrated by the accountancy profession's continued strivings to maintain their position and status through changes to reporting procedures and commitment to maintaining their independence. Arguments by the accountancy profession, during the 1980s and 1990s, that their role was one of protecting the public interest, closely mirrored (either consciously or otherwise) the ideology of the New Right, which saw public interest as being inextricably linked to economic, monetary interests. Thus self-regulation continued.

Accountancy has, throughout its formation as a professional group, adopted a reactionary role, defending the system of capitalism against its detractors, and aligning it strongly with an economic rational view of professional development. The modern history of the professions (over the last two hundred years) has been characterised by the growing importance of state regulation. Self

regulation, that is, the right of a profession to control its own practices and processes without state enforcement, is a valued aspect of the accounting profession. The 'regulative bargain' considered by Macdonald (1995) is demonstrated through, in the case of accountancy, close working links with the state via joint working groups and mutually beneficial working practices. Such a relationship has developed despite growing influence of the state in professional arenas.

The relationship between the state and the professions is one of interdependency. The power that statutory licensure invests in some professions results in their relatively protected position. The state, in return for providing protection through statute, is able, especially in relation to the medical profession, to exert influence on the professional group through legislation, regulations surrounding training and entrance requirements, and by ensuring that a perpetual client group exists. Larson (1977) provides a useful discussion on how the medical profession in the United States, through support from the state, distanced itself from 'quacks' following the Civil War. Larson argues that the support from the state for certain branches of medicine and health protection relegated traditional forms of preventative medicine to the less respected 'alternative' category of health practitioner and created a situation, still present today, where the state supported medics define illness and medical need and prescribe its treatment, leaving the patient as a passive consumer of approved care, rather than an active participant in health maintenance.

The professions also act as intermediaries in the relationship between the appellant and the state. Their position is maintained by their specific knowledge base and the state investiture in their profession through bodies such as the Law Society and the British Medical Association. Illich (1977) believes that professions are supported from above, and that it is the patronage of the powerful which allows professions to exist.

*"A profession, like a priesthood, holds power by concession from an elite whose interests it props up. As a priesthood provides eternal salvation, so a profession claims legitimacy as the interpreter, protector and supplier of a special, this-worldly interest of the public at large. This kind of professional power exists only in societies in which elite membership itself is legitimised or acquired by professional status. Professional power is a specialised form of privilege to prescribe. It is this power of prescription*

*that gives control within the industrial state. The professions' power over the work its members do is therefore distinct and new both in scope and origin."* (1977:17)

It is this latter point of Illich's that will specifically be examined in detail in later chapters of this thesis. If, as Illich asserts, professions are granted privileged positions by a powerful elite, such an elite must have considerable sway over how professions work, how their remits might evolve and how membership should be regulated and maintained. It can be assumed from this that individual professions would also have the power to prescribe how they should be internally structured. The internal structure of a profession would include aspects such as working practices, the development of core and peripheral areas of work and all encompassing aspects of organisational or professional norms and values. In this way, Larson's theory of a professional project is developed further, in this study, to consider how a project is defined and maintained within a profession. The term 'project' can also be applied to the methods by which those adopting non-standard working practices develop strategies and approaches to their professional lives.

Just as professions have developed alongside statutory and political changes, so economic changes have had a large impact on the professions. The market for accountancy has expanded dramatically in the past few decades. Core services remain insolvency and audit, however, the majority of firms, both large and small, supplement this work with consultancy services in related areas such as taxation. Thus the professional project is constantly in a state of flux, adapting as much to external pressure from its patrons as to internal structures. To illustrate the dynamics of the professional project, my research into the accounting profession demonstrates that firms across the country are diversifying into different areas of company management. An established accountancy practice in Yorkshire provides traditional accountancy services supplemented by management consultancy, IT support and personal financial guidance.

In part, it could be argued that the profession has expanded its remit to the exclusion of other occupations, a form of usurpation<sup>30</sup>. Alternatively, and to expand on a concept highlighted in chapter one, the profession could be viewed as enlarging the *peripheral* aspects of its remit. By this I mean, that, just as in Atkinson's (1987) model of a professional firm, where non-core functions were placed at the periphery of the organisation along with the peripheral workers, so, in the case of accountancy, it can be argued that the enlargement of its professional remit is also resulting in the development of peripheral, non-practice, activities which may be undertaken by peripheral, non-practice based, professionals. This concept is developed further in chapters six and seven, when the strategies and approaches to professional development of a sample of accountants and architects are examined.

### **Redefinition of a profession's market**

The profession of accounting maintains its relationship with the market through its staple work area, auditing. Audit provides regular, stable income whilst also providing a client base for whom additional services can be undertaken. The gradual redefinition of the accounting profession's remit has not gone unhindered. Intervention from the home state and European statutory bodies has led to constant redefining of the profession's boundaries and entitlements to self regulation. To use Macdonalds's term (1995) the profession has had to work hard with the state to ensure the continuation of its freedom to self regulate and maintain the 'regulative bargain'. The established relationship between traditional (core) aspects of practice and emerging (peripheral) areas of business was threatened during the 1970s and 1980s with the drafting and redrafting of the European Community's proposed Eighth Directive on Company Law (April 1978)<sup>31</sup>. The first and successive drafts recommended

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<sup>30</sup> Parkin (1974) has expanded on traditional Weberian concepts of occupational closure. He identifies usurpation as a method by which related occupations or para-professions usurp the privileges and places of their immediately superior professional groups. This study develops an alternative consideration of usurpation, seeing usurpation as an encroachment on the work of other professional groups.

<sup>31</sup> The Department of Trade and Industry investigated the proposed legislation and made three recommendations: to provide the accountancy bodies with statutory powers – not favoured because of the possibilities it opened up for litigation (as witnessed in the US); the creation of a new body similar to the General Medical Council with representatives from both the profession and the state. This was also rejected, but not by all the professional bodies, as it threatened the self regulation previously enjoyed; or government approved accountancy bodies, which would

the separation of company auditing roles from the provision of other financial services, an imposed form of professional redefinition. Thus the professional project, to use Larson's term, was developing to meet the growing demands both from the market (external) and from the profession (internal). In this way, the dynamic structure of the professions ensured that accountancy was able to change and develop to meet changing economic needs and thus ensure and justify the continuation of the profession as one of an elite of specialised occupations.

### **The development of professional bodies**

What became apparent to the accounting profession during this period of debate and development was that, across the various professional bodies, consensus did not exist. Unlike other professions with a central or single professional body (such as the Royal Institute of British Architects), additional accounting bodies developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries due to increasing market pressures and the further development and differentiation of the accounting profession<sup>32</sup>.

As a result the profession has no single relationship with the state or the market. The remits of the different accounting bodies depend upon the

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be expected to only sanction those companies, and individuals, who would meet the audit standards required. The third option was selected and incorporated into the Companies Act 1989 (Robson et al, 1994).

32. The bodies include the ICAEW; and the ACCA - Association of Certified Chartered Accountants, which is the only body that has large numbers of both members and students who are training and working in public practice, industry, commerce and the public sector. Whilst it does have a Royal Charter, its members do not refer to themselves purely as 'Chartered Accountants', a move that would create conflict between themselves and members of the Chartered Institutes of England, Wales and Scotland, (ICAEW and Institute of Chartered Accountants of Society); the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) which accounts for the smallest membership of all accounting professional bodies within the UK, reflecting the comparatively small scale of public sector accounting within the country. CIPFA reflects a broad based financial management qualification, specifically for accountants who wish to work in the public sector. There is no direct relationship between the professional body with which an accountant qualifies and the area in which they ultimately work. The development of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) took place around the start of the twentieth century. In 1975, the Institute was granted its Royal Charter, allowing it to qualify people as members and making it responsible for observing UK government standards and protecting the public interest. During the 1980s the Institute changed its name to the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, reflecting the growing importance of management accountancy. In 1995 CIMA members were given the right to use the title 'Chartered Management Accountant'.

perceived status and power of their members and patrons. To revisit Illich (1977), the professional groups hold power by concession from their patrons. The power of sole prescription enjoyed by other professions' single member bodies (such as the British Medical Association and the Law Society) is not enjoyed by accountancy. What this means for the *profession* is that it has to contend both with the protection of its professional remit from usurpers or encroachment by other professions or occupations, as well as from other professional bodies. What this means for the *professionals* is that their working roles are defined both in terms of how they differ from similar professionals within finance and how they differ from other accountants from the other professional bodies. Thus when one examines how a profession can adapt to suit changing market forces and changes at a national level to working and non-working practices, one must be aware of the differing reactions and responsibilities of the varying professional bodies. Not only may practices vary within organisations, but they may also vary across professional groups and professional specialisms, making it harder for possible changes to be implemented at a profession-wide level. My research into working practices within the accountancy profession found that, where changes to working practices were encouraged, such support was given at either an organisational or professional body level, rather than at a profession-wide level.<sup>33</sup>

### **Membership of professional bodies**

Membership of the various bodies has gradually changed. Within bodies, membership is split between those working in large multinational firms and members from small general practices. Such differences have led to conflicts within the professional bodies. An example is the recommendation to make changes to the professional training received by aspiring ICAEW accountants. Following pressure from the large firms, and a general move towards a more specialised market, recommendations were made to provide a more

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<sup>33</sup> The interviews with senior professionals conducted for the present study included interviews with a consultant from the human resources department of an international accounting firm, and with board members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants' 'Workplace' interest group, which promotes the use of family friendly working practices across its membership. Full details of these interviews are given in Chapter 4.

specialised traineeship that would prepare entrants for roles in specific positions. Large-scale opposition from general practitioners led to the changes which have been made to the training programme being less fundamental than those proposed. With more and more large firms providing discrete internal training programmes for entrants, the role that professional bodies can play within education, development and the transmission of professional knowledge, may well diminish. The encroachment by large firms on areas of professional development more commonly associated with a single professional organisation could undermine the 'professional project' and the profession's entitlement to a higher level of status and prestige than other occupations. Larson (1977) argues that there are structures and processes by which certain occupations were able to assert and maintain their right to their elevated professional status. These included the contradictory aims of both maintaining a close relationship with the market, to ensure the profession's survival, and distancing oneself from the accumulation of capital in order to reinforce notions of the profession's gentility and its right to an elevated status. Such aims were most easily met through the promotion of a single profession or professional body. Larson states that:

*"The market control aspect of the 'project' requires that there should be a body of relatively abstract knowledge, susceptible of practical application, and a market, or market potential, given the social, economic and ideological climate of the time. If the possessors of this knowledge can form themselves into a group, which can then begin to standardize and control the dissemination of the knowledge base and dominate the market in knowledge based services, they will be in a position to enter into a 'regulative bargain' (Cooper at al., 1988:8) with the state. This will allow them to standardize and restrict access to their knowledge to control their market and supervise the 'production of the producers'". (Larson in Macdonald 1995: 10-11)*

The fact that accountancy is dominated by a number of professional bodies and equally dominated by four large multinational firms may result in a disparate and more peripheral relationship between the professional bodies and the market and the state. In turn, this may mean that the ways in which the profession's norms, values and working practices are reproduced and maintained may be dependent more upon the prevailing attitudes of employing organisations than those of the competing professional bodies. This could undermine the role that the profession as a whole, rather than groups of



influential professionals, has in the production of the producers and the maintenance of their specialised knowledge base. In particular, it could also affect the way in which non standard working practices are promoted and adopted across the profession.

### **The role of knowledge within professional development**

As certain bodies of knowledge become more accessible, so the status of their holders is diminished. The chief resource of the professions is their command over a discrete body of knowledge, as Friedson argues:

*“The authority of knowledge is central to professionalism.”* (1986:36)

Similarly Weber’s analysis highlighted the importance of occupational groups securing an advantage over a body of knowledge in order to exclude other competing groups from their professional remit (Gerth and Wright Mills, 1948). However, ownership of knowledge may not be the core credential for admittance into groups or organisations. In a society dominated by the market and ownership of property, credentials such as the importance of education are determined by the market and are thus in constant flux. As outlined in chapter one, knowledge only has value when set in its market context (Leadbetter, 1999). Ownership of a specific knowledge base may not be the primary reason for inclusion in a group, it may rather be factors external to knowledge, such as where qualifications have been gained, that are viewed as key. The Institute for Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) does not look specifically for new entrants from accounting schools, rather many of its members prefer graduates from certain universities, especially Oxbridge, who can hold any form of degree, as long as it is at least an upper second. My empirical research within accounting professions found that such an approach was commonplace. When asked about the reasoning for this, one senior partner stated that ‘candidates from such universities demonstrate they have the academic ability rather than specific accounting knowledge and we know they’re the calibre of person that we want.’ Thus the qualifications have a cultural as well as academic value.

## The role of capital within professional development

Johnson (1972), in his analysis of relationships between professions and power structures, argues that Weber's use of status groups bases professionals' powers and positions solely on the ownership of knowledge. He argues that the acquisition and maintenance of a knowledge base cannot compete on equal terms with a position that is based on ownership of capital. Murphy supports this view, arguing that in a society where much is determined by relationships with the market, the relative values of knowledge and education are also determined by the market:

*"It would certainly be incorrect to claim that both property and education are necessary to being a member of the privileged social classes, for example, to claim that an uneducated capitalist who owns a large part of the means of production is not a member of the most privileged social classes merely because he or she lacks education. Simply replacing the 'and' by 'or', however, would not resolve the problem since that would imply that property and education are on an equal footing in giving access to the most privileged classes – that in capitalist society a Ph.D. is as effective a basis of membership to the most privileged social classes as is ownership of an oil company. In fact, education by itself rarely gives entry into the most privileged class and the market dominated by property classes determines the necessity, value and nature of the credentials required for positions and in that way structures the very nature of credential groups."* (Murphy 1984: 551)

This quotation reinforces Larson's theory that the status of professions is not dependent purely upon the ownership of a knowledge base but also upon the dynamics of the market and relationship with the state. The relationship therefore between knowledge and capital is complex. For those professions that 'own' discrete and distinct bodies of knowledge, the need to protect the knowledge base is important for the continued existence of the professional group. The ownership and distribution of property (and in this I include knowledge as a form of property) creates specific life chances. Weber argues that non-owners are at a disadvantage in the economy and society and such an assertion can be applied to holders (owners) and non-holders (non-owners) of knowledge. As argued in chapter one, knowledge is the new currency and access to the right forms of knowledge increases an individual's power and opportunity (Beck, 1992, Leadbetter, 1999).

When analysing the development and current formation of professions, it is evident that many professional groups or communities have formed around the protection and monopoly of certain bodies of knowledge. Professional formation has followed a common pattern for many professions: the identification of certain tasks and areas of work and mutual recognition by those working in such areas; the formation of national and local groups; the development of training and a discrete knowledge base and finally the creation of a set of ethics, sometimes supported by the state and often developed and supported by group members. Within the accountancy profession the development of examinations, professional journals and the formation of codes of conduct and standards quickly followed the foundation of professional bodies thereby formalising the knowledge base. Central to the formation of professional bodies, and the development of a professional project was the development of entrance requirements, designed to limit entry, mark out professional jurisdiction and protect professional status.

According to Geddes (1995), the educational system for aspiring accountants dates from the development of the profession at the end of the nineteenth century. The earliest accountants trained via a system of unpaid apprenticeships located in accountants' offices, followed by entrance examinations. In this way, existing professional knowledge, norms and values could be reinforced and transmitted via the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeships were limited to those who had families willing and wealthy enough to support an adult for five years. It was very rare to find female accountancy apprentices. Women were only admitted to membership of the ICAEW in 1920 after the Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act of 1919. Miss Mary Harris Smith was the first female member of the Institute. She had initially applied for membership in 1888, but was refused on the grounds that the Institute's charter "could not be adapted to include women".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Witz (1992) suggests that the later inclusion of women accountants as members of the ICAEW could have been spurred on by shortages in male qualified accountants following the First World War. The Sex (removal) Discrimination Act of 1920 might therefore have not been the primary catalyst for changes in this case.

## University training: the production of the producers

Accountancy was a late entrance to university syllabuses. The introduction of accounting degrees (the first recorded is at Birmingham University in 1900) reduced the apprenticeships for graduates to three years. The passing of the apprenticeship did not give automatic entitlement to membership of a professional body. Membership of the bodies was dependent upon a recommendation by an existing member, the service of the apprenticeship, and passing the final three examinations.

The emergence, in the early twentieth century, of accountancy as a university subject at some of the new 'civic' universities (Manchester, Liverpool and London, in addition to Birmingham), did not remove the tension between old fashioned views of academe and commerce. This tension reflects the general conflict, during the development of the professions, between commerce and a sense of 'respectability'. As Larson (1977) elaborates, whilst the market was an integral element of the professional project, a respectable distance from commerce and monetary acquisition was deemed necessary to maintain professionals' rights to status and prestige.

*"During the early twentieth century, the universities continued to play no part in the professional education of accountants. The professional bodies continued to view the universities as providers of 'capable and sensible men' whom they could train into 'capable and sensible accountants' (Robson 1994). By placing the professional education of trainees predominantly outside the university sector but by drawing on the accountancy departments of universities to add legitimation to the profession, professional bodies are able to maintain control over entry to and training within the profession. Indeed, using the ICAEW as an example, much of the status of the ICAEW rests upon its education and training processes that set it apart from the other accountancy bodies." (Geddes, 1995).*

This runs counter to Friedson's (1986) consideration of the value of higher education within the maintenance of professional status and privilege. He argues that professional bodies are secondary in importance to higher academic qualifications, when maintaining professional privilege. Access to higher education distances the professions from less qualified occupations.

## **The power of professions**

Professions exert influence through their technical competence. It is through their applied degree of knowledge that they are able to maintain an elevated position within society. Larson (1977) argues that the codification of distinct bodies of knowledge enables professions to practise and maintain social closure. If they can objectify the knowledge base, it reinforces their market control of a specific profession. The abstract application of a distinct and specialised knowledge base is distinct from the application of skills held by other occupational groups. Much of what is undertaken by the professions is intangible and thus the ability to objectify and claim ownership of a body of knowledge is important, in order to protect the professional group from usurpers and ensure that the market explicitly recognises the specialist knowledge base as belonging to a specific professional group.

Specialisms are often non-transferable so that, whilst professionals are able to progress within their chosen field, they are more limited in terms of movement outside their professional sphere. Dale (n.d.) defines this as an occupational labour market. This has two essential structural features, (i) specialised knowledge and skills and (ii) mobility between jobs within the profession. Occupational labour markets typically work within professional occupations where workers are as likely to move between firms as within firms, and will have well defined career ladders, often changing employers to gain promotion. This is borne out in the empirical chapters of this study, where movement between practices is as common as moves within a single practice. As discussed in chapter two, movement between firms, within an occupational or professional group, is more common during periods of market buoyancy.

Within the occupational arena, professionals are able to exert influence by merit of their 'office'. Their influence is also supported and propagated by their "respectability and gentlemanly behaviour" (Macdonald, 1995). For example, accountants stress their differences from auditors and auctioneers (noticeably in the length of study and training necessary to gain a charter). According to Macdonald, these differences are crucial in order to claim a higher status and also justify the monopolisation of their area of work. Their market position is also ensured. Clients will use the professional services in the perceived

knowledge that the status of professions will ensure that the costs associated with their services are not inflated. The ability to prescribe and translate a body of knowledge to the lay person is a central factor here.

The knowledge base of all professions is expanding, and professional bodies recognise this. Roberts and Coutts (1992) argue that formal knowledge such as can be demonstrated through examinations is not sufficient to ensure promotion and career development.

*"It is also essential to acquire organizational knowledge such as experience in different specialisms, informal information about important customers, and knowledge of the unwritten traditions of the organization."*  
(1992:385)

Within accountancy, the professional dynamics are constantly changing. The profession developed around the central themes of technical specialisation, a clear market need for bankruptcy services, and an increased customer base requiring the profession's services. In recent years, the profession, at an international level, has been dominated by a number of large accounting firms. To develop Larson's theory of a 'professional project', that of identifying, developing and protecting a distinct body of knowledge within the market, the large accounting firms have developed a project within a project, that of identifying and protecting sub-areas of work within the market. In this way, the large firms practice occupational or sectoral closure within the profession and outside its parameters. Coupled with this, it could be argued that the large firms are also practising a form of usurpation, by moving into areas of work formerly undertaken by other professions or occupations such as management consultancy, research and legal financial issues. This development of a project within a project counters any view of a profession as a homogenous entity. The development of a subset of 'supra professions' within accountancy also counters Friedson's perception of professions as 'organised groups independent of firms and other occupations in the same class or stratum' (1982:39).

The status of the largest four international firms (the Big 4) within the accounting profession means that they wield tremendous authority within their field. Thus to consider Illich's (1977) argument that professions are granted a license to practice from a professional, superior elite, one can see that within

accountancy, the profession is dominated and shaped not only from above but also from a powerful elite within. What this means for professional change and development is that much of what happens within the profession in terms of working practices and norms will be directly influenced by the Big 4, a form of professional hegemony. To take this idea of professional hegemony one step further, and to develop Larson's concept of professional power lying in the role of the production of the producers, it is useful to consider the role that professional bodies and some practices play in the development and transmission of knowledge. One of Britain's 'Big 4' accounting firms (Firm A), has recently funded a number of studentships at a university with a renowned accounting department. Undergraduates studying numerate or full accounting degrees are offered the opportunity to apply for a studentship. The successful students follow a Firm A approved course and then move straight into accounting traineeships. This move towards practice directed degrees signals a departure from the traditional university route. Not only are the successful undergraduates sure of a traineeship at Firm A, but the firm also saves money in the longer term by having to invest fewer hours in later, in-house, professional training.

The ramifications at a professional level could be far-reaching. Professionals differ from those employed in other occupations by their members' propensity to change employers to gain promotions rather than change their area of work within an organisation. A move towards a firm-directed course of study could result in qualifying accountants being highly skilled and knowledgeable in, for example, Firm A's area of work, but unable to transfer that specific knowledge base to another firm. This could undermine a central aspect of professionalism, that of the ownership and practice of a distinct, specialised body of knowledge independent of organisational influence and potentially reducing the cohesion of professional education by increasing the numbers of ways in which professional training can be offered. In addition, those working within such an organisation may come to be defined more by their organisation than by their profession. The former 'rites of passage' via a degree, traineeship and qualification, followed by the majority of the profession over the last 20 years, will no longer be the sole approach to movement into the profession. This move away from a single graduate entry to the accounting

profession signals a distinct change from the prevailing pattern of professional entrance witnessed over, at least, the last 20 years. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, attempts have been made to restrict entrance to the professions and thus protect their status and privilege.

### **Architecture's approach to the production of the producers**

The architecture profession differs in this regard. Dominated by small practices, the profession does not have very large, dominant practices in the same sense as accountancy. There are large, international firms but they do not lay the same role in the profession as the 'Big 4' do in accountancy. In addition, the existence of a single professional body also provides a more cohesive professional structure. The movement towards the establishment of a professional body occurred at a similar time to that of the early accounting bodies. Within the architecture profession, during the mid-nineteenth century, RIBA sought to create a registration process for architects in an attempt to limit entry to the profession via examinations. The growing demand for individually designed buildings, spurred on by increased national prosperity had led to greater numbers of skilled workers calling themselves architects. In an attempt to 'protect' the profession and in a first step towards the development and maintenance of the professional project, a growing desire emerged for the creation of a professional body. The proponents of this move included established architects with growing practices and comfortable incomes as well as young entrants who saw registration as a suitable recognition of their qualifications. This latter group felt that RIBA was slow to push for statutory regulation, and thus set up the Society of Architects in the 1880s. The society's main achievement was to push for the first regulation acts to be introduced to parliament in the late 1880s. Despite failing to get the Acts passed, they did succeed in forcing the RIBA to adopt registration as its official policy in 1890 and thus restrict access to the profession and protect the professionals from the actions of 'lesser' occupations, usurpation. Along with restricting access to the professions via specialised forms of training, architects were also constructing their professional market through processes of awareness raising amongst the public.



Formal proceedings from meetings of the RIBA were always well publicised in the professional and general press, thereby raising the visibility of the body. At the same time, the RIBA was introducing examination programmes as a means of regulating and limiting entrance to the profession. Traditionally, architectural education had been undertaken in offices via a system, of pupilage, indeed, qualified architects were keen to protect this system as pupilage often provided a major source of a practice's annual income. It was finally agreed, in 1882, that for new entrants, membership of RIBA should be dependent upon the passing of the entrance examination. This system was further developed until, in 1887, a three stage process of testing was introduced, comprising a preliminary examination covering general knowledge with two architectural exams comprising parts two and three. Part three could only be taken by those 21 years of age or older. Such a system limited entry to the profession, thus imbuing those who gained entrance with professional privilege, and helped develop a clear system for the production of the producers, one of the key determinants of Larson's 'professional project'. The development of the three stage process of testing built on the gradual movement of training from the workplace to the academic sector. Friedson views higher academic training as the key characteristic that differentiates professions from other occupations.

*"Professions (are) those occupations that have in common credentials testifying to some degree of higher education and that are pre-requisites for holding jobs."* (1986:xii)

1841 had seen the establishment of two chairs of architecture at Kings and University Colleges, London with three-year courses designed to further the formal education of architects. A concerted movement towards a higher education system for architects led to the first full time school of architecture being established at Liverpool University in 1895. In 1902, architectural schools were formally recognised with graduates being given exemptions from RIBA examinations. By the late 1950s all schools of architecture had RIBA recognition and thus the higher education system was formalised. The picture changed somewhat with the development of polytechnics in the 1970s. Unlike the accountancy profession, no move has been made by larger, more influential firms to direct or manage the education system to meet with

individual requirements, and thus architecture maintains its uniform approach to the production of the producers. Architecture's professional project reflected the processes outlined by Larson (1977). Along with the formalisation of the education process, architecture was developing closer relationships with the state and state structures.

Across Europe in the early part of the twentieth century, the desire for state regulation of architecture was becoming more widespread, with acts being passed in many European countries including Austria, Italy and France. After protracted discussions, in 1938 an act was passed restricting the use of the title 'architect' to those whose name was on the register, in the first step towards professional closure.

*"Statutory registration is professionalism pushed to its logical conclusion."*  
(Kaye, 1960:156).

Following the registration acts of the 1930s, the architecture profession maintained close relationships with the state. Indeed, according to Duffy (1998), the Welfare State was all pervasive in the careers of architects in the 1950s, responsible for the commissioning of large-scale post-war public building programmes, reflecting Illich's (1977) concept of professions practising by concession from the state. From the beginning of the 1970s over half of the architectural profession was employed either directly or indirectly by the government (Duffy op. cit.). The 1980s saw a violent swing away from centralised planning and large scale public sector employment and this particularly affected those professions that had not negotiated unbreakable contracts with the government<sup>35</sup>. The Thatcher government sought to 'liberalise' the market place by introducing competitive tendering for the majority of publicly funded services, including the design and build of public buildings, and removed the profession's right to set minimum fees for each job. This period saw a move away from a cohesive architectural 'movement' towards one based on individual skill and design, with architects having to operate within the market economy with processes determined by market

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<sup>35</sup> Professions with 'unbreakable contracts' include those that provide services directly to the public, often administered and funded directly by the state. These include education and medicine.

constraints. Thus architecture's professional project was to be heavily determined by both the involvement of the state and market.

### **Knowledge and status as cultural capital**

Status groups, unlike classes, are normally communities (related to their employment or area of residence or religion). Such groups do not have a distinct shape and their status in society is estimated by the power that they hold, their value to the community at large and often, the exclusiveness and protection of their membership. The status and prestige which professions possess are also enhanced by perceptions of their 'cultural capital' such as education and knowledge.

Cultural capital, it has been argued (Sayer, 1991, Bourdieu, 1986) reflects social rank and status. The consumption of seven years' university training by some students, including architects, marks out their preferred profession as one with high status. Whilst some forms of consumption (training period, area of knowledge) offer a clear example of how status systems can exist within society, it is more difficult to determine how such consumption can translate into enhanced positions within professional groups. Crompton (1993) has outlined the differences between an exploration of occupational differentiation from a cultural level and an aggregate perspective. Many analyses focus on the outcomes of occupational segregation, the aggregate impact of segregation or segmentation such as exclusion from a professional body due to qualification, experience or gender. To analyse how occupations develop and maintain systems of segregation or closure one must acknowledge the cultural systems at play, that is, the processes. An examination of the processes of segmentation or closure provides an understanding of how such systems/processes are reproduced and maintained.

Adams and Tancred (2000) argue that the processes through which the architecture profession developed, that of a strengthening relationship between on the one hand, science and on the other, business, led to the development of a highly culturally segregated profession. Architecture was thus dominated by middle class, educated, men. Women's entry into the profession was obstructed by cultural beliefs of what was right or 'normal'. As Adams and

Tancred (ibid.) argue, in their consideration of professional segregation based on sex differences, despite architecture being heavily influenced by artistic skills (skills which the authors argue, women are presumed to appreciate, rather than excel in), their lack of recognised ability in issues relating to science or business prevented them from practising the profession.

*“Thus the profession of architecture is located at the crossroads of one of women’s potential (believed instinctive) strengths and two domains where women are assumed to be without particular talents.” (ibid: 7)*

Mannheim (1936) argues that the outcomes of systems must be understood within the context of the processes adopted to produce them, rather than simply in their final aggregate form. To contextualise such an abstract thesis one can use a further example from the architectural profession. It is now widely recognised within the architectural profession that there are reasonably large differences between the career progressions of male and female junior architects. Therefore the relatively faster career progression of male architects is the outcome of a process far more complex than female underachievement or sexism within practices. In part, the poorer outcomes experienced by female architects could be explained by the training period coinciding with key child bearing years and by a failure of the architecture profession to recognise this and adapt its processes accordingly. This point, drawing on the detailed arguments of theorists such as Hakim (1987, 1995, 2000) and Crompton et al (1990, 1997, 1998), discussed in detail in the preceding chapter, is explored more fully in chapters five and six, using empirical evidence to examine the differing career development experiences and strategies of male and female professionals.

Chapter two highlighted how notions of ‘human capital’ have been used to explain the differences in male and female professionals’ career progression. Bourdieu (1986), in his work on cultural capital and class, identifies four different forms of capital: economic; cultural; social and symbolic. He emphasises the divergence within and between classes and uses the term class as more of a generic name for different social groups whose members are similar in a number of ways, for example level of education and membership of a professional group. Such groups can also be defined in the Weberian sense as ‘status groups’. Bourdieu also singles out the ownership or

holding of certain types of knowledge as a basis for the development of status groups. Again, Bourdieu looks at the processes adopted to form such groups and the methods adopted to differentiate between classes, rather than purely mapping the differences.

### **Knowledge and occupational closure**

Any Weberian examination of a social group or organisation must address action. That is, the methods by which social groups are formed, their characteristics developed and reproduced and the ways in which such attributes are accepted and protected. An analysis of social closure needs to address how closure develops, examining not only how members of closed groups relate to external society but also how relations are maintained within the group. Much literature on social closure (Hughes, 1971, Murphy, 1984) focuses on the importance that credentialism plays in forming and maintaining social closure. Hughes sees credentialism as being the 'essence of collective social mobility' (Hughes, 1971 in Macdonald, 1995:50). Many examples of credentialism are closely linked to economic capital, such as the location of a profession's headquarters. The practices adopted by professional groups, in order to ensure closure, are related more closely to cultural than economic capital. It is difficult to determine which should take precedence. Some commentators, notably Murphy (1984), see economic or property capital as being an integral part of any discussion of cultural capital. Whilst knowledge or skill underline the area in which a professional practises, access to economic capital and relationships with the market provide the infrastructure upon which the practice depends. Macdonald (1995) argues that cultural capital is a key component of the professional project and that professions aim to achieve social closure in the realm of knowledge above all. Indeed, both Larson and Friedson view knowledge accumulation and maintenance as essential aspects of professionalisation.

Weber does not specifically address the ordering of assets. He argues that power and status are not determined by economic capital alone, but it is evident that they are closely related, although causality is hard to prove. Weber's examination of the role of status within professions highlights the stigma of "economic power with extra status origins" (Murphy, 1984:192). This

stigma is clearly reflected in the development of the architectural profession where those architects looking to practise architecture for financial gain (professional architect) were scorned by the more well off students who wanted to pursue it for artistic or leisure reasons (artist architect) (Kaye 1960). Larson revisited the idea of extra status origins in her analysis of the professional project;

*“the success of the professional mobility project depended on the existence of a stable market; but also, in the process of securing a market, the professions variously incorporated ideological supports connected with the ‘anti-market’ structures of stratification. These pre-industrial structures provided both models of gentility towards which nineteenth century professional men aspired and images which legitimised status inequality (1977:66).*

More recently, in the accounting profession, the lack of pure accounting courses rather than economics courses, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was put down to snobbery on the part of the academic community towards ‘business’ courses. Such a trend continues in part today, and can explain the gaps between academic theory and accounting practice, (Geddes 1995).

### **Accreditation and closure**

It can be argued that during the period of education and qualification, all professionals are engaged in strategies of exclusion. A long training period regulates the supply of an occupation’s own labour force and creates a monopoly over skills and knowledge. Accreditation and certification, usually in the form of exams, have become established measures of professional competency. As Geddes (1995) states:

*“Examinations and the part they play in the certification of expertise are central to the twentieth century concept of a profession whose claims to superior status are to a large degree based on the existence and application of a body of knowledge.” (1995:25)*

Exams are regarded, within the professional bodies, as an established measure of competency. To the outsider, the lay person, it is this measure of competency that establishes the professional project as superior. If it appears

as though entrance to a profession is limited only by the ability to qualify and pass examinations, the profession maintains its status. Anderson-Gough (2001), in a detailed study, examines the experience of accountancy trainees within professional development, outlining the way in which examinations have formed one strand of occupational closure. Geddes (1995) argues that examinations have a number of key roles to play in professional development: acquisition of knowledge and expertise is tested, professional status is reinforced, and aspiring professionals engage in a common socialisation process or rite of passage. Anderson-Gough argues that such a common experience adds to trainees' feelings of solidarity and professional recognition.

The instruction of aspiring professionals is a key component of the professional project. Those who instruct and examine may also act as gatekeepers to the profession, thus having power and influence over entry and membership. Academic and professional instructions are not neutral activities. The knowledge passed on by academics and practitioners will be tempered by subjective experiences. The siting of professional training within a university is not essential to the maintenance of a profession but strong links with sources of academic knowledge and research add value and status. Such links can also add legitimisation to a profession or professional body.

*"Monopolizing training is important, but monopolizing it at a university level brings a built in legitimization of monopoly in terms of cognitive superiority." (Larson, 1977:48)*

The architecture profession (by virtue of its professional body) takes this monopolisation one step further. The RIBA accredits certain schools of architecture. To receive and maintain the accreditation, they have to follow closely agreed areas of curricula and in return are awarded the accreditation which brings with it a level of prestige. Members of the RIBA education board commented that the most able architectural students would generally choose to study at an accredited school, thus maintaining the high status of the profession and its professional group. The close links forged between the architecture profession and academia are perceived to be weakening, both by members of the practising profession and by academic members of the profession. A gap exists between research undertaken into aspects of design and construction and practices implemented 'on the ground', fostered perhaps

by a lack of practitioner involvement in research and insufficient recent 'hands on' practice experience by academic staff. In many schools of architecture, fewer part time lecturers/practitioners are now employed. This is partly due to practitioners having to spend greater amounts of time in fee paying employment and also due to many universities reducing the number of visiting lecturers employed. What this implies is that the gap between practice and university based training will increase.

The debate concerning the relative importance of knowledge compared with economic capital cannot be played out in full here. It is important to note that the starting point for this examination must be that economic capital has provided the basis for many practitioners to study and develop their knowledge bases and for potential consumers to request such services. Once gained, knowledge, its utilisation and maintenance became the core of the professional project rather than the pursuit, solely, of economic power.

It is possible to argue that the existence of a distinct knowledge base is not the factor that leads to professionals acquiring such power, rather it is the way that this knowledge is organised or monopolised. Torstendahl (1990) outlines a series of steps to knowledge monopoly within the professions. The first step, the transfer of knowledge, is a central feature of monopolisation, the most common vehicle of which is attendance at university. Secondly, the type of knowledge base involved and how this manifests itself is also important. Torstendahl uses the example of the medical knowledge that both doctors and nurses hold. The way that this knowledge is transferred and internalised is central to the differences between the positions of doctors and nurses. Such differences can also be attributed to the gendered differences between these two groups. The third step towards knowledge monopoly is the 'shape of the state'. It is common that knowledge based professions acquire state backed charters in order to endorse their role in society.

Returning to Torstendahl's steps to knowledge monopoly, the final step towards monopolisation is the role of the client/employer of the professional. The client will transfer their problem to the professional on the understanding that the professional will solve such problems through using their specialised knowledge base. In many cases, this problem has been highlighted by the profession and its solution can only be met by the professional. In the case of



accounting, all limited companies are required by law to provide financial reports on their yearly business. The only way that this task can meet legal requirements is if it is undertaken by specialist auditors. Audit services are used by accountancy firms as a way of providing the first in a number of professional services to customers.<sup>36</sup> Thus, historically a system has emerged where problem solving of a specific nature has become the preserve of the professional. Dingwall (1996) argues that many professions have little material evidence of their skills, unlike a builder or tailor. As such, the exchange of services rests upon the relationship of trust developed between the professional and their client.

Thus the process of monopolisation of problem solving by professionals endorses their status as the provider of specific services. Much is dependent upon reputation and 'professional behaviour'. Abbott (1988) defines this as subjective jurisdiction which is accepted by the public. Jurisdiction is viewed as the exclusive property of the professions and, to place it within a Weberian analysis, contributes to the status of the profession. The more esoteric a body of knowledge, the wider the jurisdiction a professional can enjoy. As Abbott states;

*"A profession is organised around the knowledge system it applies, and hence status within a profession simply reflects the degree of involvement with this organising knowledge. The more one's professional work employs that knowledge alone – the more it excludes extraneous factors – the more one enjoys high status."* (Abbott, *ibid*:118).

Such a view is reinforced by Larson (1977) who argues that the formalisation of a knowledge base has a strong impact on the potential for the unification of professions. As chapter one highlighted, the development of a specialised knowledge base has been noted as one of the key factors of the development of the modern labour market (Leadbetter 1999, Bell 1973). Within the professions, further specialisation is common, with accountants and architects often developing specific areas of expertise within their professional field. For some, this affords them greater opportunities for career development and

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<sup>36</sup> Although following the Enron and Anderson relationship this method of business development is under consideration. In 2002 Enron, the US energy company was found to have adopted fraudulent book keeping methods in order to increase its market value on the stock market. Anderson, one of the then 'Big 5' international accounting firms, was implicated in the case.

progression. For those looking for a move towards non-standard working practices, their location in a specialist area of the profession may provide them with a valuable 'bargaining chip' when requesting changes to their working practices, as outlined in the later, empirical chapters. The more formalised a knowledge base, the more objective and thus tangible it appears. Less salient forms of knowledge imbue the professional groups with greater levels of influence as 'lay people' will find it harder to access and reproduce the knowledge base. The professional incumbent is able to define the problem or need and recommend and administer treatment or a service that is often supported by the state.

For example, the security of the architecture profession was bolstered by a general growth in building regulations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The comprehension and implementation of these regulations necessitated a high level of literacy amongst those that used them. Prospective clients often lacked access to information on the regulations, and builders often lacked the specific level of knowledge necessary to comprehend the full implications of the regulations. Both clients and builders looked to architects to interpret the regulations and thus the role of the architect became central to the design and build processes. The Architects Registration Acts of 1931 and 1938 further restricted the involvement of non-professionals in the architect's work area. The Acts excluded amateurs from using the title of architect and formalised the RIBA's control over large areas of architectural administration and education, effectively 'closing' the profession to usurpers.

### **Closure or usurpation**

Parkin (1979) has expanded on traditional Weberian views of closure. He introduces closure strategies other than those of a purely exclusionary nature. His concept of usurpation, discussed earlier, outlines a method by which related occupations or para-professionals usurp the privileges and places of their immediately superior professional groups. What he does not go on to elaborate is whether this then leads to de-professionalisation of the usurped group. In the architecture profession, the use of computer aided design (CAD) and thus the growth in the para-professional group of architectural technicians has led to some debate as to whether the traditional architecture profession is

being de-skilled. That is, the importance of artistic skill is being undermined by the development of technology. Indeed, within my research a senior lecturer at a school of architecture without RIBA status, believed that the lack of the RIBA stamp of approval was due to the school's heavy emphasis on technical and computer proficiency in its students as well as on more traditional artistic skills.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, many members of the architecture profession bemoan the fact that the education system is not providing students with such skills as Computer Aided Design (CAD) and that the RIBA has not kept up with developments in the field, preferring the traditional, exclusive education to one more grounded in day to day practice. Abbott (1988) terms this concept degradation, arguing that, with technical improvements, routine elements of a professional's work are gradually being relegated to the duties of para-professionals or non professionals, moving the work of the core employees to the periphery. This view could be countered. Returning to Atkinson's model of the Flexible Firm (1987), discussed in Chapter One and referred to earlier in this chapter, the movement of elements of a profession's work to the periphery of professional practice could rather be viewed as the further development of the professional project. As argued earlier, the professional labour market is dependent upon its relationship with the market and with the state. As changes occur within both of these arenas, the professions need to adapt and change in order to maintain their validity within the modern labour market and also to continue to protect their relative prestige and status.

This chapter's focus on the development of the professions has identified a key process for the development of the professional project. Using Larson's model, it is apparent that there are 5 key stages involved: Market determination and economic rationalisation; limiting of competition; the gaining of social credit or status; a granting of monopolistic control to the more successful or effective professions, and the transmission of knowledge generally through the vehicle of university education (Larson, 1977). What this study now goes on to consider is how such a process of professionalisation

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<sup>37</sup> Such a focus on the traditional, artistic skills can perhaps be traced back to the origins of the modern architecture profession, where schisms developed between those who wanted to pursue a career in architecture from a purely artistic interest (the art architects) and were often self funded, and those for whom the interest in architecture was vocational as well as artistic. Kaye, 1960 provides a more detailed consideration of this.

can adapt to the dynamics of wider social and labour market conditions. In particular, the study seeks to apply the notion of the professional project to individuals' personal strategies for meeting the varying commitments of their personal and professional development and thus develop Larson's concept further.

This chapter has considered how the two professions of accountancy and architecture have developed and adapted to reflect inter and intra-professional changes. The chapter has demonstrated how the two professions have followed broadly similar patterns of development, that is, the identification and eventual monopolisation of a discrete set of skills and the formalisation of this skills base through the development of professional bodies and the creation of formal training courses. The chapter has also explored how the identification, development and protection of distinct knowledge bases have been furthered through an increased emphasis on the need for new entrants to have passed a formal system of further education, in most cases, a university degree. The chapter now considers the similarities and differences between the two professions in their approaches to the creation, and continuation, of their 'professional projects'.

As outlined in the introduction, the two professions were selected due a number of similarities in their professional characteristics. Both professions have clear programmes of further and higher education; their general professional training period lasts seven years, encompassing the more generic undergraduate training, followed by a period of specialised, professional training, in which aspiring entrants undertake extended periods of training alongside periods of work experience. Both professions require their entrants to reach a standard of training before they can practice as professionals (their Charters). This level of professionalism was developed, not by the accounting or architecture practices, but rather by the professional bodies that govern areas such as undergraduate and post graduate qualification, continued professional development and also have some say in professional governance.

The two professions do, however, differ in a number of areas. Architecture can be argued to have maintained more of the characteristics associated with a 'traditional profession'. By this I mean that, with architecture being represented by a single professional body, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA),

the profession displays a greater degree of homogeneity in terms of professional training, standards and development. The RIBA governs all aspects of the curricula associated with schools of architecture. As such, it is able to influence the nature, format and content of university training, depending upon issues or interests that are to the fore in current architectural debate. For example, RIBA along with associated organisations in the design and building environments<sup>38</sup>, are keen to promote the role of sustainable development. All accredited RIBA schools of architecture thus must include such aspects of study in their curricula. A number of architects interviewed argued that the central role that RIBA played in the professional standard setting of architects was resulting in new entrants having quite esoteric skills. Whilst new architects were often highly skilled in the more 'artistic' side of their profession, they were less competent in the more practical, day to day tasks associated with a modern architectural firm, including the use of IT packages such as CAD (computer aided design), and project management skills. Interviewees voiced some level of frustration with their professional body, seeing it as dominated by 'old school professionals' with little relevance for modern practice concerns.

Conversely, the accounting profession is not represented by a single professional body, but by a multitude of professional organisations, representing a number of different fields of accounting practice. Accounting is also dominated by four large, multi-national firms which play an important role in standard setting within the profession as a whole and often play a leading role in the development of new areas of professional business such as movements into management consultancy. The role that professional bodies play within these four companies is secondary to the role of each accounting company. As is demonstrated in later chapters, those accountants who manage to be employed by such firms are as likely to identify themselves with their company as with their profession. At no point in my research did architects demonstrate such affiliations. Architects identified themselves foremost by their professional status rather than by their employing organisation. From the interviews with architects, it became evident that, not only did architects identify chiefly with

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<sup>38</sup> Including CABE – Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

their profession rather than their employing organisation, but they were also less likely than accountants to consider themselves as part of a 'team'. By this, I mean that the architects spoke of being 'detailed' to undertake a specific aspect of building design, as an individual, whose work would slot into an overarching project being developed by a number of 'individuals'. Accountants were more likely to talk of team work, and how their 'team' would undertake specific duties. In part, this is perhaps due to large cohorts of qualifying accountants being recruited at one time by larger employing organisations compared with the architects' experiences of often being the sole 'new recruit' in a practice. From another perspective, this perception and approach to working perhaps emanates more from the origins of the architect as a sole artist (the 'art architect', Kaye, 1960), competing with others in order to display their individual flair or style. This differing approach to work organisation has distinct ramifications for working practices. As an individual bringing specific architectural skills to a project, the architect can be argued to have a greater degree of workplace autonomy and thus flexibility, enabling them to take up a series of 'portfolio' appointments, slotting into a number of architecture projects. This offers the freedom to practice as a sole architect and thus attempt to balance any competing home and work commitments through self employment. Conversely, such a role can be argued to make the professional dispensable. If, as demonstrated through my research, architects are able to 'slot' into a number of projects, then there are likely to be a variety of architects competing for such a slot. As such, this can weaken an architect's position when requesting changes to their working patterns.

The accountants interviewed were more likely to speak of working as part of a wider team. Whilst they moved between a number of specialisms during their training periods, they were employed as part of a larger team of, for example, auditors or tax specialists. Like architects, they had specific roles within the project remit, but there was more awareness of team working and, seemingly, a greater opportunity to move into other roles, thus enhancing their professional experience and opportunities for CPD. The role that the larger accounting organisations play in the development of CPD is also important. With the continued growth and dominance of four multi-national firms, accountants are

being schooled in the skills required by that organisation, rather than in those areas identified specifically by the professional bodies. This provides an interesting dilemma for accountants employed in such firms. Whilst they are able to receive high levels of training and development, this is often specific to the organisation, rather than to the profession and thus could, in a sense, lead to deskilling for those accountants who choose a more organisational than professional career. In terms of working practices, some accountant respondents highlighted how they were choosing to 'compromise' on the *professional* focus of their careers in order to benefit from the opportunities offered by wider *organisational* careers.

This difference between the two professions is made manifest in the fact that whilst no architects intended leaving the professional arena, albeit, perhaps choosing to work in more 'peripheral' areas, some accountants had chosen to move into organisational rather than professional career paths. The commitment to the profession rather than organisation thus seemed stronger within architecture. This is considered in more detail in the later empirical chapters.

### Methodology

The main aim of this research has been to examine the impact of non-standard working on professionals employed within architecture and accountancy. In particular, the study has aimed to gain an understanding of the ways in which the adoption of non-standard working practices has impacted on the career development and career opportunities of professionals.

The research has attempted to address these issues through reviewing the extensive literature on the themes of non-standard working and professional development and also through surveying a number of architects and accountants across the country. Professionals were surveyed via a questionnaire and a sub-sample was subsequently interviewed through face to face, in-depth interviews. The analysis has attempted to address the following research questions:

- What are the various forms of working practice adopted by architects and accountants surveyed within this research?
- What strategies have been adopted to balance the different demands of home and work?
- What impact, if any, has the adoption of non-standard working practices had on professionals' career development, and in which ways, if any, has this impact occurred?
- How does the formation and structure of the professional groups impact on professions' abilities to change their working practices?
- What role does the market play in the development of non-standard working practices, both within the labour market as a whole, and more specifically, within professional labour markets?
- What are the implications of a movement towards greater labour market flexibility for the future development of the professions?



## **Research themes**

The research was structured around a series of inter-linking themes and considerations. These were;

- (i) the general movement within the UK labour market towards a flexible labour market, including an examination of the differing forms of non-standard working prevalent within the UK's labour market;
- (ii) the forms of non-standard working practised by the survey respondents and interviewees and their impacts on career development;
- (iii) the development of professional labour markets in accountancy and architecture including the specialisation and monopolisation of various bodies of knowledge and occupational closure, and finally
- (iv) the role that the market plays in determining the development both of the professions and their professional groups and working practices.

By structuring the research around these themes, the study aimed to highlight the dynamics of change both within professional groups and across the labour market. At a finer level of analysis, an exploration of the factors that contributed to professional development, maintenance and closure would provide the research with an understanding of the specific phenomena that structure the professional labour market and enable or hinder change.

The research design comprised a number of interlinking stages: a detailed literature review; gatekeeper interviews; a pilot postal questionnaire survey; a main stage questionnaire survey; face to face, in-depth interviews; and a thematic analysis of data emerging from all stages of the research.

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## **Contribution to the knowledge base**

Through the consideration of the research themes and labour market phenomena outlined, the research aimed to produce a greater understanding of the ways in which two specific professions develop and change, rather than professions as a whole. The research would explore the ways in which the heterogeneous nature of both professions and professionals either enabled or restricted further developments and changes within the professional labour

market. The research would build on existing theories of professional formation (Larson 1977, Friedson 1986) by using Larson's concept of a professional project to examine how the concept is applied *within* as well as *between* professions to create forms of occupational segregation. Such factors are not to the fore of Larson's analysis, which focused on the external rather than internal processes of professionalisation. The research would further develop Larson's work on the marketability of professions and their monopoly of specific skill sets and knowledge bases through an examination of internal professional structures, exploring how two professions have chosen to approach market and state moves towards a more flexible labour market.

### **Methodological considerations**

The primary aim of this research is to gain an understanding of how non-standard working practices impact on professionals' career development. Chapter three has already provided a discussion of how professions in general, and the two professions of accountancy and architecture in particular, developed. At the heart of the discussion was a consideration of the ways in which these two specialist occupations had developed into 'professional projects' (Larson 1977). This examined how they had developed a distinct knowledge base and formed professional groups in order to limit access to the profession and the knowledge base, thereby protecting their position. In short, the research aimed to gain an understanding of how professional markets were constructed, and of how professions' norms, values and structures developed and were reproduced. This also required a consideration of the social and cultural aspects of professional development, as well as the economic. To this end, the research adopted a social constructionist approach to an examination of the professions and professionals.

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### **Social constructionism**

The 'social', as Jackson (1999) states:

*"intersects with the cultural on the one hand and the economic on the other and encompasses all aspects of social life, from structural inequalities to everyday interaction."* (ibid, para 5.7)

The social construction of the two professions of accountancy and architecture is heavily informed by the cultural values of their members but is also dependent upon dynamics of the labour market and economic rationalisation. The development of the two professional groups has drawn on a traditional notion of labour force participation, in which employed males are supported by home-based females, and on norms and values that have emerged during the process of professionalisation, such as the value of formalised systems of education. My analysis draws on comparisons between the two professions under examination, as well as on wider labour market and occupational analyses. The empirical evidence that draws on professionals' experiences of career development and on their perceptions of equity and opportunity within the professions is predominantly subjective. Thus my interviews have focused on narratives of self, a method often associated with discourse analysis (for example Habermas 1987). The narrative approach, from a social constructionist perspective, enables the researcher to develop an understanding of individually located social and cultural biographies and to examine how such biographies relate to broader professional, labour market and general social developments. It also provides an understanding of how interviewees have perceived their career development and progression and the social and cultural locales in which this development has taken place. Whilst the interviews focussed on narratives, all data was thematically analysed, as outlined later in the chapter.

### *Social construction and relativism*

Respondents' experiences were examined in relation to professional norms. Their working practices were defined as non-standard relative to the more common working practices of the professions. Social constructionism is a relativist methodology. It enables researchers to develop an understanding of how their subjects and the subjects' environments have been constructed. What is said to be the way things are is really just the way that we look at them. This is an important point when looking at professional formation and more specifically at occupational segregation and closure. A central component of occupational closure is the perception of those within an occupation of its remits and parameters. A social constructionist approach

enables the researcher to consider such remits and parameters more closely to gain an understanding of how they have developed, how other possible occupational forms may have been discounted and how the dominant occupational parameters have been maintained. This is particularly important in the context of examining the development and dominance of certain working practices. By gaining an understanding of how such working practices have been adopted and reinforced within an occupation or profession, the research is able to address one of its main aims, of considering the wider impacts of adopting non-standard working practices on professional development and formation.

Berger and Luckmann (1966), in their classic text on social construction, provide a useful consideration of the relative value of certain sets of behaviours or actions. They highlight the importance of developing an understanding of the historical foundation or construction of a profession's or institution's norms and practices. Their emphasis on an historical or process analysis of institutional development has strong similarities with the Neo-Weberian approach to professional formation outlined in chapter three. Berger and Luckmann's analysis is similar to Larson's (1977) consideration of the development of dominant forms of professional behaviour. Berger and Luckmann argue that, through the process of institutionalisation, certain patterns of behaviour or conduct take precedence over others not because they are theoretically more valid but simply because, over time, they become the dominant form of behaviour.

*"Institutions [also], by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up pre-defined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible."* (Berger and Luckmann, op. cit.).

By using a relativist, or comparative analysis of professional formation and development, this study is able to contribute towards a better understanding of how professional behaviours develop by comparing two professional groups. The study shows how one type of working practice has taken precedence over others and has become the 'pre-defined' working practice of the professions. A relativist perspective enables the research to explore one particular area (in the case of this research, the professions) and relate it to other experiences or

situations in order to draw meaning from it. In this way, it can seek to address questions such as: how have the two professions of accountancy and architecture developed? Are there differences between the two in terms of the processes of professionalisation adopted? How do the working practices adopted differ between the two professions? Unlike previous analyses of professions, (MacDonald 1995, Larson 1977), this relative, social constructionist approach also enables detailed analysis of relative developments within the individual professions as well as between. Thus, the research can also address questions such as: How similar are the career development biographies of those working full time compared with those adopting non-standard working practices? What are the relationships between those in the two professions and their markets? How do professionals interact with their markets and with the wider labour market? Unlike advocates of a positivist approach, social constructionists argue that meaning cannot be drawn from objects but rather is derived from the ways in which individuals and organisations interact with objects. In terms of this research, that interaction is examined in relation to the labour market (Crotty 1998).

### *Social construction and gender*

The social constructionist approach is not restricted to the social, but also draws on the cultural and economic locales and correspondingly, analysis of empirical and secondary data needs to be located within the economic as well as social spheres. This is vital for the analysis of my data, which, through its focus on non-standard working practices, has a particular focus on women within the professions. The role that economic rationalisation has played in the development of clearly gendered labour market roles for males and females is as important as the social constructs within which this development has occurred.

*“..whether we would describe the object of the interaction as natural or social, the basic generation of meaning is always social for the meanings with which we are endowed arise in and out of interactive human community.” (Crotty, 1998: 55).*

In exploring occupational development and closure, I would replace the second use of the word social in this extract with *male*. Within the social confines of organisations, much of what is defined as 'social or cultural' is based on male constructs, such as the development of working hours, or socialisation techniques within the workplace. Further, the social constructs inherent in society, and more specifically the professions under investigation in this thesis, have meaning only within the strict confines of their settings. However, these meanings, which can be open to opposition and reinterpretation, all too often become 'the way things are'. This can lead to problems in organisations when change is resisted due to an adherence to existing systems and processes. The maintenance and reinforcement of the 'status quo' is a key barrier to the processes of change and modernisation within many organisations. The status quo is also often dominated by male patterns of behaviour. As outlined in chapter one, the development of non-standard working practices has coincided with a massive increase in the number of women entering the labour market. The adherence of many professions to a 'traditional' notion of full time, 'nine-till-five' working hours has reflected their origins in a male dominated labour force where full time employed males were perceived to be supported by a home based wife. Thus the cultural or social norms of many professional groups are often based on outmoded assumptions about their membership.

A social constructionist approach has enabled this research to address the study's aims and questions from a number of perspectives. As well as considering the development, organisation and maintenance of professional groups, a social constructionist approach also provides the opportunity to examine the differences *between* individuals and *within* the professional groups. In particular, it enables a consideration of the gendered constructs of those working within the professions, especially those who adopt non-standard working practices.

As I outline later, my research reveals that labour market decisions are based not entirely on gendered notions of career structures but rather on specific life course events common to both sexes, the structures in which they operate. Here it is interesting that those males who opt to pursue non-standard working methods are perceived by some of their peers and colleagues as adopting essentially female labour market traits. They are also very aware of how their

working practices differ from those of the male 'norm', which is structured around notions of working long hours, supported by a home based, female partner, and governed by a 'work first' perspective on their lives. As the main focus of my research is predominantly on female professionals (women being more likely to take up non-standard forms of working than their male colleagues), I consider that feminist theoretical ideas provide the most appropriate framework for my research and analysis. A feminist, social constructionist approach allows me the flexibility to explore matters in greater depth, whilst not restricting the focus of the research solely to female experiences. Rather, it takes account of the structures within which the research subjects operate and through a process of constant comparisons of emerging data, reflections on my developing theories and a constant re-appraisal of my research approach, enables the research to be adaptive. The approach enables an analysis of the impact of gendered social and cultural mores on organisations and individuals. This approach enables the research to consider the ways in which the gendered divisions within the professions are socially constructed and thus potentially changeable. Reviews of the existing literature on labour market practices have highlighted their essentially dynamic nature. Thus if labour market constructs, and in that I include professions, are not fixed, then nor are differing forms of working practices.

### *The social construction of gender within the workplace*

The adoption of a feminist theoretical perspective also leads to a number of other considerations. Some approaches to women and their experiences of work adopt a very broad approach, what Jackson (1999) would term 'grand theory' or what I consider a macro approach. My research has used a lower level, more localised, micro, approach to the study of both men and women within the professions, recognising issues specific to some professions and some groups of professionals. When looking at the experiences of the female professionals, it would be naïve to purport that the experiences of highly qualified women are similar to those of women employed in the lower skilled sections of the labour market. There may be many similarities but there are also as many differences. As I explain in later chapters, when they adopt non-standard methods of working there are strong similarities between the

experiences of male and female professionals. Alvesson and Billing (1997), also highlight this point. They argue that differences between social, ethnic or racial groups of women can be as great as those between men and women. In certain instances, for example the professions, the similarities between males and females are likely to be greater than those between different social groups of men or women.

Maynard (1995) has called for 'middle order theories' which emphasise the specifics of location, social contexts and institutions. This latter factor is central to my analysis of the impact of organisational norms on working practices. Maynard claims that such an approach provides grounded generalisations, which are more easily integrated into empirical research. This middle order approach enables us to use grounded methods of analysis without resorting to more grand scale theoretical approaches, which are remote from everyday life and insufficiently flexible to account for the varying life patterns of differing groups of women. A feminist theoretical perspective is "well placed to analyse the localised contexts of women's everyday existence and the meanings women give to their lives within a broader analysis of the structural and organisational norms within which the female professionals operate" (Jackson 1999 para 4.2). I consider this an equally valid statement to apply to considerations of men as well as women within the professional labour market.

### **Grounded theory**

The methodological approach underpinning this thesis has been grounded theory. Grounded Theory can be defined as an anti-positivist approach, developed during the late 1960s when positivist theories were dominant in social science analysis, especially in English language social sciences. Kinach (1996) states that grounded theory was:

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*"part of the humanist attempt to tie social science data more closely to the beliefs and concerns of participants so that social science practitioners would find in theory a more congenial guide to the problems of practice."*  
(1996:1)

In their classic text, Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that their approach offered social researchers a greater structure and level of rigour than was



normally associated with qualitative research. Grounded theory is 'grounded' in a series of observations, of literature, primary source data and empirical information, all of which are treated as a single source of data. Each set of data is codified, analysed and explored in the same way and consequently proponents of the grounded theory approach argue that the knowledge that such an approach brings forth is grounded in data. Theories emerge from a process of constant comparison, a method that is an amalgam of systematic coding, data analysis and theoretical or purposive sampling. At each stage of research, the researcher is able to make sense of what arises by developing overarching theoretical frameworks from the data arising from the initial analysis. For example, in my research, through early interviews with accountants and architects, and their professional organisation representatives, I found that much emphasis was placed on 'traditional' forms of work, that is; being visible within the workplace for long periods of time and having clear distinctions between working and leisure arenas. At first, I labelled these re-emerging themes "working hours". As I undertook and analysed more interviews and compared the themes with those arising in the literature, I re-termed these phenomena "time deviance".

Grounded theory is an iterative rather than ordered process. Secondary data analysis and empirical research can take place simultaneously, both benefiting from the other's emerging data. Theory is:

*"...inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory should stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge."* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23)

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From the outset of the research process, each piece of information that is gathered is subjected to the same questions: What are the themes and sub-themes inherent in this data? What is the chief concern of people in the research area? What are the key reasons for this? Glaser (1992) states that

grounded theory allows the emergence of the research findings from the perspective of the substantive area participants. Key research questions should never be forced, thus maximising the acquisition of non-forced data.

### *Grounded theory and feminist research*

This methodology fits well with a feminist research approach where feminist research is driven by its subject matter rather than by its methods (Reinharz 1992: 213). Feminist writers (Oakley 1981, Harding 1987) have argued that a feminist research perspective necessitates qualitative research methods where the relationship between the subject and researcher is central.

*“Feminist research is driven by its subject matter, rather than by its methods.”* (Reinharz, op. cit. p213).

Oakley (1981) posited a contradiction between ‘scientific’ interviewing requiring objectivity, and feminist research requiring openness, engagement and the development of an interviewer/interviewee relationship. Reinharz (1992) argues that this relationship is accentuated in feminist interview research because feminists ‘try hard to avoid perpetuating the exploitation of women’ (1992: 26). As such, interviewers also need to consider the role of status in the interview relationship. Should status differences be downplayed? How should issues of authority be approached? One method of addressing this issue is ‘research self disclosure’ whereby interviewers disclose their personal interest in/experience of the research area. By developing intimacy with the subject, one invests subjectivity in the research. Is this good feminist research practice? Should personal interests be made apparent? Does this lessen the objectivity of the research, and thus, the findings? Disclosure too early in the process can lead respondents to feel that their own experiences are not going to be listened to or valued. The objective role of interviewers, particularly in areas where the subject area is sensitive, can lead to greater disclosure on the part of the respondent (Reinharz 1992).

However, the grounded theory approach has been criticised for downplaying, or failing to identify adequately, gender biases and inequalities present within research settings or in data. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) highlight how, in

a series of participant observations, Strauss (1987) failed to identify, code or analyse the specifically gendered dimensions of his research setting. Observing the duties of a (female) nurse, Strauss made a series of case notes which not only failed to highlight the obviously gendered nature of the nursing profession but also reinforced stereotypes through the use of gendered analogies to describe tasks undertaken during the observations.<sup>39</sup> By failing to observe, or if observed ignoring, certain aspects of the research setting, Strauss reinforced gendered differences and stereotypes. The basis of the grounded theory approach, that of identifying, cataloguing and analysing a series of emerging, 'unforced' data is argued to enable a more iterative and intuitive research process. However, by incorrectly identifying, or failing to identify, a central theme of the research field at the onset of a programme of study, inaccurate or heavily biased research evidence could be developed and perpetuated. A further criticism levelled at grounded theory, (Alvesson and Sköldberg op cit p31) as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is its tendency to view empirical data and theory as two completely separate entities, thus failing to appreciate the complex nature of research settings and to underestimate the role that social construction, and the holding and perpetuation of certain values and mores, can have on an apparently value free, objective research setting. The approach that I adopted, including not only constant comparison of data emerging from interviews but also ongoing literature reviews, aimed to merge the various sources of data, to highlight emerging themes and revisit already analysed transcripts or texts in order to ensure that such themes had not been overlooked. Ezzy (2002) stresses the importance of this approach when he argues that:

*"the researchers should enter into an ongoing simultaneous process of deduction and induction, of theory building, testing and rebuilding." (p10)*

In this way, dominant assumptions or values, (in the case of this thesis, these include values associated with male dominated working practices) can be identified and challenged rather than reinforced and supported.

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<sup>39</sup> The authors highlight how Strauss used terminology associated with the duties of milking maids (from their name, always women) to describe the nursing tasks associated with changing bags of blood. "She milked..." Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000:25)

Grounded theory is not the only approach to face criticism for failing to address or identify adequately the role that social constructs or values can play in a research setting. As well as participant observation and unstructured interviews, case studies occupy a key position in research focusing mainly on women's interface with work and home, (see amongst others Harding 1987, Franks 1999).

*"The case study is a tool of feminist research that is used to document history and generate theory. It defies the social science convention of seeking generalizations [sic] by looking instead for specificity, exceptions and completeness."* (Reinharz op. cit. 174).

Such approaches have inherent problems. If the deciding factor for an appropriate method is the subject's potential reaction to the researcher, conclusions may be undermined by the subject's perceptions of the role of the research and by the researcher's perceptions of the research setting. As previously considered, problems such as these still exist when using a grounded theory methodology, however, the gradual development of the overarching theoretical framework and with it the purposive sampling of respondents enables the researcher to take a more proactive approach to the research. Without the existence of a pre-defined hypothesis or theory underpinning the research, unexpected phenomena occurring through the research process will add to theory generation acting as a catalyst in the identification and exploration of related but previously unexplored themes.

In my research, I had developed, from early readings of the literature, some loose notions of there being gendered differences concerning reactions by professionals to non-standard working. From this early evidence, I could have developed a hypothesis that the impact of non-standard working within the professions on career development was one of male full time workers progressing rapidly in an environment where women who adopted non-standard ways of working were penalised for adopting different working practices. As I found from early interviews with both male and female employees, views of non-standard working differed strongly according to age

group and life stage<sup>40</sup>. Because of this emerging finding, I purposively selected interviewees from each of these life stages to see if I could further examine the relationships between their experiences and their work and life strategies.

### *Adapting the grounded theory approach*

Some of the processes outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) can be challenged and indeed have been by Strauss in a later work on research methods (1997). The early work on grounded theory strongly advises against undertaking literature reviews prior to starting on the empirical research. Such advice is impractical to the majority of researchers. A literature review is central to the framing of a research area and does not, in my opinion, restrict the way in which theories and research areas will emerge from the later empirical data. Indeed, I think that a literature review stage is key to the forming of research questions and the finalising of the research area. This does not mean that the reviewing stage need stop completely during the empirical data collection stage. Rather it means that the researcher is able to develop a detailed understanding of the research area prior to moving into the field, thus informing the development of research instruments and enhancing the quality of the data.

Glaser and Strauss argued that theory should only emerge from data during the process of constant comparison. All stages of the research should be given equal importance and take place at similar times. This process offers the researcher the ability to highlight, at an early stage of the research, key variables that repeatedly emerge from the various forms of data and thus start to develop theoretical ideas. As I outlined earlier, during the early stage of both the literature review and the empirical data collection, I started to identify a theme that re-emerged through the data – that of time deviance as perceived

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<sup>40</sup> From my research it is apparent that there are key stages within both professional careers and the life course. Those between the ages of 25 years and early 30s were more likely to stress the need to work hard and long hours in order to progress and not consider the need for work life balance policies. Those between the ages of 33 and 40 were more likely to be in the throes of child rearing and key stages of career development and identify a need for more flexible forms of working pattern whilst recognising and in some cases experiencing the resulting impact on career development. Those from 40 onwards either had quite traditional views of career patterns or had actively experienced the impact of non-standard working on their career development.

by organisations<sup>41</sup>. The notion that non-standard working was viewed as a form of time deviance emerged from a series of interviews with professionals employed in both accountancy and architecture (males and females). The fact that this theme was also emerging from literature reviews enabled me to identify it early on in the research process and highlight it as a possible theme to emerge from later interviews. If I had followed the grounded theory approach strictly, and not undertaken a literature review early in the research process, I might not have picked up existing literature on time deviance or not given it sufficient prominence and thus missed what has become a core aspect of my research.

Strauss' later work on grounded theory re-appraises the role of literature reviews within the research process and argues for an earlier identification of research themes (Strauss and Corbin 1990). In response, Glaser terms this approach 'forced' and argues that it more closely mimics the methods associated with action research, (Glaser 1992). My approach resembles that advocated by Strauss and Corbin (op. cit.). However, what neither approach to grounded theory has emphasised sufficiently, is the need for constant comparisons to be drawn not only during the data collection stages, but also during the later stages of writing up. The full value of the data emerges only as one considers it in its entirety.

## **The research design**

In the early stages of planning the research design, I considered a multi method approach. Multi-method research approaches can overcome the problems of the single method. For Reinharz (1992), triangulation, the use of a multi-method approach, has a special relationship within feminist research methods. This does not mean that it can only be used when research has a sole focus on women but rather a multi-method approach is necessary, not to cover all research eventualities, but rather to reflect the multi faceted nature of modern (working) lives. More than other researchers, feminist researchers highlight the fact that (predominantly) women's lives are structured both internally and externally. As will be examined in more detail in chapters five to

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<sup>41</sup> An audit trail of analysis pertaining to time deviance is included in annex 7.

seven, assumptions about both males' and females' home and working lives structure the ways in which working practices are adopted, promoted and perceived. In order to reflect these dynamics, a multi-method approach is adopted. Grounded theory enables the researcher to use a number of approaches in order to develop and test theories.

### *Approaches to the research process: an introduction*

In my research approach, I developed a structured questionnaire to gather data from a large pool of accountants and architects on their career development, qualifications, experiences of non-standard working, household composition and home commitments. This generated a large amount of comparative data about professionals' career histories and experiences of employment, as well as about their experiences of non-standard working and external commitments. From this, I was able to select respondents for in-depth interview, looking at factors such as experience of non-standard working, work and home commitments and life stage.

The benefits of a structured approach to research are best reflected in large-scale surveys, where face to face qualitative work would be impractical. Such research can provide indications of behaviour, opinion and experience analysed by varying demographic characteristics. The quantitative analysis of data, mirroring, as it does, a purely scientific and positivist approach to analysis, provides robust, and some might argue, conclusive results. However, phenomenology, with its emphasis on context and locality, provides depth and meaning to the 'bare bones' of purely numerate analysis (Crotty 1998). Synthesis of the two approaches can go some way to overcoming their respective shortcomings. Grounded theory recommends an iterative process, whereby as the research and thematic analysis continues, gaps in the empirical evidence are highlighted and suitable respondents are purposively selected.

Within this study, the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data was supported by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with respondents as well as with gatekeepers within the professions, such as representatives from professional bodies and accounting and architectural firms. The fieldwork was

supported by a comprehensive literature review. This enabled me to highlight gaps in the current knowledge base and to consider the implications of existing research for the empirical stage of the study, thus utilising a process of constant comparison, as advocated by Strauss and Glaser (1967).

In much existing research on non-standard employment (Burchell et al 1999, Atkinson 1987) the focus is on 'external' issues (e.g. the role of non-standard employment on employee relations). Its impact on the functioning of the home and family are generally afforded little attention. The public/private dynamic is central to any consideration of non-standard working practices. In particular, as is indicated in chapter one, the employment patterns of women have never been 'standard'. The non-standard employment construct is heavily gendered and reflects the 'relational' dimension of women's labour market experiences, comparing them with those of their male counterparts. It could be argued that considerations of non-standard working are also 'relational', comparing the experiences of those adopting such practices with those of their full time employed counterparts. In designing the research instruments I tried to reflect the differing employment experiences both of the two sexes and of those working full time and those employed on a non-standard basis. I considered that chronological information about work histories needed to be accompanied by a series of more thematic questions about household formation and private/family commitments and responsibilities. My questionnaires were therefore constructed to elicit detailed, comparable information on career development, career histories, qualifications and other work related details, as well as information on household formation, caring commitments and non-work issues. I intended that the data gathered from the questionnaires and later interviews would help to move the focus on professional development and occupational closure away from one that is implicitly gendered to one that is more relational, linking professionals' relationships both to the market (external) factors and to the household (internal) factors. Hence the research would focus on the relationships between professionals and their professions, their firms and their home life as well as on the wider relationships between the professions, their patrons and the market.



The questionnaire was designed to elicit a good understanding of respondents' working lives, career development and job histories, as well as their working patterns and non-work commitments. It was split into four sections: *about your job; training and qualifications; current and previous working practices*, and *about yourself*. Professionals are generally used to providing detailed descriptions of their career histories, either in curricula vitae or on application forms for employment or training. As well as providing information on current and previous positions, length of time in each position and details about their organisation, the purpose of the first two sections of the questionnaire was to familiarise the respondents with the research area before asking for more personal information.

The responses relating to job and qualifications enabled me to understand the differing positions and hierarchies within the two professions. They also enabled me to see how individual 'professional projects' were constructed and developed. In addition to questions about career history, respondents were also asked their firms' size, the sector in which it operated and whether the respondent was an employee or self employed.

The questions about areas of expertise and responsibility enabled me to consider, during analysis, how professions' knowledge bases and areas of specialism were changing and developing.

The questionnaire also included questions on the highest level of qualification and on current training needs and commitments. I was keen to gain an understanding of how professions maintain and reinforce their knowledge base and what support is given to this by employers or by the individuals themselves. At the heart of the professional project is the maintenance and protection of a distinct body of knowledge. By restricting access to this knowledge base, professions are able to assert their right to occupational status and prestige. Both the questionnaire survey, and the face to face interviews sought to highlight the nature of that knowledge.

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<sup>42</sup> copies of the questionnaires are included in the annex

I asked about membership of professional bodies because a key stage of the formation of a profession is the development and establishment of a professional body. In architecture, the RIBA is the main professional body to which the majority of architects belong. The accountancy profession has a number of different bodies, membership of which is often determined by the area of the profession which a trainee enters. This question sought to gain an understanding of the different professional bodies in existence and also the extent to which membership was voluntary or a condition of employment.

The questionnaire also included a section on working practices. Respondents were asked about their main job and any other jobs they might have, for example, ad hoc, self employed pieces of work. In addition, a question about working hours was included. Earlier reviews of existing literature had highlighted the prevalence of long working hours and I was keen to see if this was a feature of the working experiences of respondents to this study.

Those who indicated that they were working hours other than full time, 'nine-till-five' were asked about the reasons governing their working practices. Research on work life balance has highlighted that not only childcare but also elder care, training commitments and other non-work activities play a role in determining working practices. I was interested in collecting evidence on the reasons behind non-standard working practices within the professions. Respondents were also asked about possible plans to change their working hours over the next five years and reasons for possible changes.

The questionnaire was designed as a 'stand-alone' research instrument to be used to gain a good understanding of working practices, professional development and working histories of professionals within accountancy and architecture as well as a sampling frame for the later face-to face, in-depth interviews. It included basic demographic information and asked if respondents would be willing to take part in further research.

### *Gaining access*

As outlined in the introduction, I chose the two professions of accountancy and architecture because of their similarities in terms of length of study and training and the existence of established career paths and professional bodies. I chose

professions with which I had no personal connection so that I would have the advantage of viewing them from the 'outside', with some degree of objectivity. I used gatekeeper interviews to develop an understanding of current and important issues within the two professions and to ensure that my research and analysis were as grounded in the professional areas as possible, I therefore embarked on a series of 'gatekeeper' interviews. These were conducted with members of the professional bodies, academics at schools of architecture and accountancy, senior members of firms and members of the professional interest groups such as the Architects for Change (AFC) group and the Institute for Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) group 'Workplace'. As well as giving me a better understanding of established and emerging issues, they also acted as *bona fides* in the subsequent stages of the research. I felt that this latter point was very important. I was approaching busy professionals to discuss with them issues pertaining to their career development and their work life balance. I was committing them to spending some of their time completing questionnaires or speaking to me in person. Good relations with the gatekeepers meant I could return to them to clarify points or to gain access to mailing lists for the questionnaire survey.

*"People are often more comfortable with interventions when they are supported by opinion leaders and powerful members of their community. Negotiating the support of such people and organisations at the outset will often ease access to individual research settings."* (Murphy, Spiegel and Kinmouth 1992: 163)

I was initially concerned that some potential respondents, who might not agree with the professional bodies or their firms' opinions or policies, might be prejudiced against my research by my association with some of the gatekeepers. To reduce this risk, I emphasised that this was independent research, not sponsored by any organisation and that all information would be treated confidentially. I re-emphasised this at the beginning of each face to face interview.

#### *Structured questionnaire: circulation, response rates and research bias*

Through the gatekeeper interviews I identified respondents to whom the questionnaires could be sent. The accountancy questionnaire was piloted at a

weekend event, in February 2001, when a cross-section of accountants was meeting for a professional training event. The architects' questionnaire was piloted in March 2001, an evening meeting of the local RIBA group. In total, 17 pilot questionnaires were returned. Changes were subsequently made to both questionnaires. With the help of the two professional bodies questionnaires, along with reply paid Sheffield Hallam University envelopes, were then sent to regional<sup>43</sup> members of the two professional bodies. In total 390 questionnaires were distributed.

### **Response rates**

The initial response rate within the first two weeks was encouraging (35 per cent). I then sent a reminder letter, which elicited five more responses, but after that no more questionnaires were returned. After another two weeks I sent another reminder letter, which elicited no further responses. I undertook a preliminary analysis of the returns (17 questionnaires were returned) to see whether they were concentrated in particular demographic groups, particular firms, or from members of the various professional interest groups (such as Architects for Change or the Workplace group for accountants). There were no obvious patterns to the responses.

### *Boosting response rates*

Having considered ways of gaining additional respondents, I decided upon a more wide-ranging approach. Each year, both the architecture and accountancy professional journals and publications list the top firms in terms of staff numbers and in the case of accountancy, performance<sup>44</sup>.

For the architecture firms I searched for company email addresses via the internet and got details of over half of the firms (56), which I emailed with an outline of my research, a copy of the questionnaire and contact details. The

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<sup>43</sup> In the first instance, as I was based in Yorkshire and had developed good working relations with the regional bodies, the questionnaires were sent to all the Yorkshire members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and of the regional body (South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire) of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)

<sup>44</sup> The monthly Architecture Journal (AJ) publishes the annual AJ100 which ranks firms according to size and since 1991 has provided that data broken down by sex as well. The accountancy journal Accountancy Age, also published monthly, and the Inside Careers guide to chartered accountancy also publish annual data on size of firms and performance (in terms of training opportunities, current clients, number of overseas offices)

accountancy profession is different as it is dominated by four large multi national firms (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, KPMG, Deloitte and Touche and Ernst and Young), I emailed each of these firms at their London headquarters and at the regional offices in Yorkshire and the North West. In addition I emailed 26 other smaller firms across the country. Between the two professions, approximately a third (27) of firms contacted responded stating that they would be willing to take part in the research.

**Table 4.1 Structured questionnaire –response rate and number**

| <b>Research Stage</b>                             | <b>Accountancy</b> | <b>Architecture</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Piloting stage - distributed</i>               | 25                 | 25                  |
| <b>Pilot stage responses (rate)</b>               | 40%<br><b>10</b>   | 28%<br><b>7</b>     |
| <i>First distribution</i>                         | 240                | 150                 |
| <b>Total First distribution responses* (rate)</b> | 39%<br><b>92</b>   | 34%<br><b>49</b>    |
| <i>Second (booster) distribution</i>              | via 7 companies**  | via 12 companies**  |
| <b>Second distribution responses</b>              | <b>51</b>          | <b>81</b>           |
| <b>Total - all responses received</b>             | <b>143</b>         | <b>130</b>          |

\*This includes a few responses received after reminders were sent to non-respondents and includes those received at the piloting stage

\*\*For the second stage of distribution, companies were contacted and thus I do not have a figure of the total number of potential respondents within those companies to whom the questionnaires were forwarded. Therefore I am unable to present the number of responses to this stage as rates.

### *Booster stage questionnaires*

These were sent to all employees via email, to a single company email address for further distribution within the companies. Respondents were able either to email completed questionnaires back to me, or to mail them anonymously to Sheffield Hallam University. From the 86 firms contacted and the 27 that responded, I received completed questionnaires from 19. The firms contacted had been the largest in terms of staff numbers, and I received on average 7 responses from each firm. Most of the responses were from London and the South East and the large cities including Manchester, Edinburgh and Newcastle where the largest firms are located.

## **Follow up, face to face interviews**

Over a third of those who responded to the questionnaires indicated that they were willing to be contacted again for an interview. Analysis of the postal/email questionnaires showed the impact that life stage appeared to have on propensity to work non-standard hours. Using the grounded theory approach of purposively selecting respondents in order to develop emerging theories, I initially interviewed a selection of male and female professionals aged between 27 and 35 years who were working non-standard hours (13 respondents) plus those who had indicated that they wished to move to non-standard hours. To examine the impact of life stage on career choices I also selected a number of those in the next age group; 36 to 50 years (19 respondents). These included professionals at key stages in their career and family formation.

## **Non response**

As indicated in the earlier paragraph on response rates to the pilot stage of questionnaires, analysis of the returns did not highlight any obvious patterns in response and this non response. The first distribution of questionnaires were circulated via professional bodies and thus non-respondents would include practising or non-practising professionals who were not part of a professional body's membership. The booster stage of questionnaire distribution involved sending the questionnaires via email to a number of practices. This posed a number of possible problems: (i) often the practice had one email address and thus could create a problem of the recipient only forwarding the questionnaire to those working part time, or to only female members of staff; (ii) recipients might feel that their confidentiality was undermined by emailing their response and thus not complete the questionnaire. In the event, from analysis of my respondents, it is evident that I received responses from both males and females, from a wide variety of age groups and from those working on a variety of contracts. In addition, responses came from both large and small organisations and from sole practitioners. A number of questionnaires were also returned via the post, thus maintaining the respondents' anonymity. From this analysis, I can only assume that the non-respondents were similar, in the majority of ways, to the respondents. Recent analysis of response rates (Noble, 2002) has indicated that, when attempts are made to increase

response rates, the greatest increases occur amongst sections of the population that are already represented, thus not increasing the representativeness of the sample.

**Table 4.2: Respondent details – questionnaire survey and face to face interviews**

|                                                   | <b>Architects</b> | <b>Accountants</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Questionnaire – total responses</b>            | <b>130</b>        | <b>143</b>         |
| Male                                              | 85                | 71                 |
| Female                                            | 45                | 72                 |
| <b>Face to face interviews*– total interviews</b> | <b>18</b>         | <b>14</b>          |
| Male                                              | 8                 | 3                  |
| Female                                            | 10                | 11                 |

\*also includes two telephone interviews

The interviews were semi structured and predominantly face to face, using an aide memoire, and tape-recorded. I developed a generic aide memoire that I used for respondents from both professions (see Appendix 5). This aided later analysis and comparisons between the architects and accountants. Each aide memoire was personalised prior to interview: career and personal information gathered from the structured questionnaire was copied on to the aide memoire so that the data gathered from the questionnaire could be confirmed. Checks were also made for any changes in work or personal circumstances and possible inconsistencies in, or misinterpretations of, the information received. This series of checks formed part of the introduction to the face to face interviews.

Reinharz (1992) speaks of some forms of research ‘perpetuating the exploitation of women’ and encourages interviewers to disclose any interest in the area at the start of the interview. I outlined in the interviews that I was an outsider to the professions of architecture and accountancy and that all information would be anonymised and used confidentially. I informed the interviewees, in advance, that I intended to tape the meetings, and offered them the chance to request that I did not do so.

During the interviews I also made brief, key word, notes which I later checked against the transcripts and used to explore further emerging issues. Whilst Glaser and Strauss (1967) guided against tape recording interviews, I find that this approach enables the researcher to concentrate more fully on the interview and later to pick up on and revisit points that might have been missed at the time.

At the end of the interview I explained how the information was to be used, offered respondents the tape once transcribed and copies of transcribed notes. In addition, I sent all interviewees a copy of the work and education chronology that I noted down immediately after the interview, to check for any errors. I believe that this approach empowered the respondent and also contributed to a successful interview. I transcribed the recordings as soon as possible after interview, usually within seven days of the interview. This approach enabled me to fully incorporate the key word notes with the recorded conversation and enabled me to return promptly to respondents, if necessary, on points of clarification and to provide the work and education chronology.

In two instances, where face to face interviews could not be arranged at mutually convenient times, telephone interviews were undertaken. These were also fully recorded. I do not feel that the telephone interviews elicited the same depth of information as the face to face interviews. However, as many professionals are used to having long, detailed telephone conversations, I feel that the data gathered was of value. In both instances, the respondents were provided with the aide memoire in advance and the interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour.

### **Data analysis and reporting**

The data from the interviews, along with that from the questionnaires and literature reviews, has been thematically analysed, using the grounded theory approach of highlighting categories and properties of the data, that is, key words and themes, and comparing them across all data sources, to look for emerging patterns. This led to the discovery of similar work patterns and experiences for those in distinct life stages. Using the grounded theory approach, with a number of research stages occurring simultaneously, I was



able to return to the existing literature to explore research themes emerging from the in-depth interviews. This enabled me to then select further respondents who either had similar characteristics to those already interviewed, or who would enable the research to develop in another, related direction. Throughout the analysis stage I was aware of my subjective role in identifying patterns and themes and was careful to ensure that I grounded emerging qualitative evidence in the existing literature and the dataset developed from the questionnaire survey. This process of constant comparison across data sources highlighted the value of the triangulation process, where the development of research themes and findings is grounded in a number of data sources. As Strauss (1997) states, any analytical process must take account of researchers as

*“fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing that grounded theory.” (1997: 6).*

### *The emergence of research themes and findings*

Distilled core research themes gradually emerged from a wide number of varying research findings. The core themes cover issues including non-standard working and notions of time deviance, the impact of life course on attitudes towards non standard working, organisational behaviour and the availability of non-standard working. The selection of further potential respondents emerged from this process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advise that once data has been examined thoroughly and exhausted of new variables, future respondents should be selected in order to test emerging theories or explore related areas.

Using this approach, and having interviewed respondents at very large firms, I then approached those working for smaller firms to see if size of organisation had an impact on working hours and career development. The information already provided in the questionnaires had given me an idea of respondents' organisational structures. I was able to draw on this in interviews to see how the construction of the firm impacted on working patterns, for example, whether the values and norms within an organisation led to long working hours, or placed emphasis on out of work activities.

I was also interested in the differences between respondents who had had a career with a single employer, or no more than two employers, and those who had been employed by a number of firms. The literature surrounding professional career development had highlighted the differences between those with a professional commitment (a vocation) and those with an organisational commitment. I was interested in pursuing this theme through the face to face interviews.

### *Data analysis and the structure of the thesis*

Once the data collection process was complete, I had a series of key research themes to explore and address. The subsequent chapters of the thesis are structured by these themes. The data from the structured questionnaire survey is examined and considered in chapter five. The data on training, qualifications and working hours are compared with national data collected through the Labour Force Survey. Comparisons are drawn across the two professions when considering the 'standard' career profiles of those working in the two professions.

Chapter six comprises an examination of the empirical evidence on the themes of time deviance and the symbolic use of time. This chapter includes a consideration of the growth in 'time greedy' institutions as experienced by the respondents to the face to face interviews. The full time, part time dichotomy is also considered, highlighting the false logic of treating professionals working full or part time as naturally dichotomous whilst ignoring the heterogeneity of part time and full time workers.

Chapter seven outlines in more detail the organisational responses to non-standard working. In particular, consideration is made of cultural and organisational expectations of professional norms and identities and how these impact on those working non-standard hours. Comparisons are drawn between the experiences of the two professional groups.

The evidence gathered from the literature reviews has already been considered in detail in chapters one to three. Chapters one and three considered the broad themes of non-standard working and professionalisation and chapter two considered the themes of time deviance, workplace and organisational commitment and the role of economic rationalisation and

notions gender in determining working practices. Chapter two thus provides the theoretical background to the empirical evidence explored in chapters six and seven.

## **Ethical Issues**

As with any research study, the design of the research instruments, the fieldwork and the analysis and writing up needed to be governed by a strict set of ethical guidelines. In the last decade, two acts of parliament have added legislative impetus to ethical considerations about the conduct of research. Following the 1998 revisions to the Data Protection Act (DPA), made law in 1999, there are strict guidelines governing how individual data is collected, stored and used. In short, anyone collecting data must make clear how it is to be used and the possible ways in which it could be further used. The publicity surrounding the DPA has resulted in many people being far more aware of the uses and room for possible abuses of data. In addition, the 1998 Human Rights Act (enacted in 2000) has placed a greater onus on organisations and government to ensure that all collection, use and publication of data is undertaken adhering to strict guidelines. Much of the focus of these two acts has been on how organisations and government treats personal data, nonetheless, the broad concepts can also be applied to individual research projects. The ethical considerations to be made in any research study can be grouped under three headings: informed consent; confidentiality and reporting.

### **Informed consent**

Gaining informed consent, that is, ensuring that respondents fully understand the reasons for research, how the research will be used and how their personal data will be managed and protected was central to this research study.<sup>45</sup> I adopted a number of approaches to gaining this consent. All communications to potential gatekeepers, respondents to the surveys and face to face interviewees included a brief explanation of the aims and objectives of the data

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<sup>45</sup> Within my research, informed consent was vital. There are, however, instances where informed consent is not possible or desired, for example where covert or participant observation methods are adopted.

as well as the contact details of my research supervisor to provide a form of bona fide. At the beginning of each interview with gatekeepers, the aims of the research were repeated and I provided a brief explanation of how the data was to be used. All those who participated in the gatekeeper and in-depth interviews were advised in advance that I wished to tape-record the interviews.

They were offered the opportunity to request that the conversation not be recorded or to have the tapes returned to them following transcription. None of the respondents requested not to be recorded or to have the tape returned.

The questionnaire included a brief introduction to the research area, how the respondents' details had been made available to me and how the data provided was to be used. Potential respondents were also reassured of the confidentiality of any data used. The questionnaires concluded with a brief section repeating how the research was to be used and providing contact details of the research supervisor if respondents wanted further information.

I provided all respondents with an outline of how the information might be used further, for example in journal articles or professional publications. Through these means I believe that all respondents to the various stages of the research were made aware of the nature of the research and that I did indeed have their fully informed consent.

## **Confidentiality**

Having secured respondents' agreement to take part in the research, through the receipt of completed questionnaires and scheduling of gatekeeper or face to face interviews, the data provided then had to be treated confidentially. A number of issues arose in this respect. Firstly, professional communities are relatively small compared with the general labour force. This was particularly the case in the gatekeeper interviews when members of professional bodies, interest groups and other university departments were interviewed. I ensured that all interviews were conducted singly (unless respondents had suggested in advance that a discussion with two or more gatekeepers might prove useful) and in locations that provided some level of privacy (meeting rooms in their offices, at the university or at my office). Data security proved less of an issue

as I stored data in my home study and on a personal computer rather than an open access facility, for example in a university library.

The key issue of confidentiality of the questionnaires concerned how they were circulated and returned. The pilot and first stages of the distribution were via paper distribution at professional events or through the regional professional bodies. Returns were made via a freepost envelope to the University. Thus those who did not wish to take part in later research could respond anonymously. The second stage of distribution was via email to employer email addresses. Those employers that indicated a willingness to take part in the research then circulated the questionnaires via the company email system. Respondents were then given the opportunity to respond via email or anonymously via the post. Responding via email meant that, even if respondents did not wish to take part in the further interviews and left their contact details off the completed questionnaire, I still received their contact details via their email. The procedure that I used to address this was to print off all questionnaires, those with contact details and those without. In most cases, those respondents willing to take part in the interviews were then subsequently contacted via email. For those who had emailed responses but not provided contact details, having printed their questionnaire, I deleted the email, thus maintaining, to some extent, their anonymity.

All face to face interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. As with the gatekeepers, interviews were conducted in respondents' work places, my office or mutually convenient locations such as meeting rooms in public libraries or cafes. Again, as with the gatekeeper interviews, a number of respondents knew each other, and this was certainly the case when interviewing a number of individuals from the same company. I thus had to ensure that I did not inadvertently pass on newly acquired knowledge when interviewing one respondent shortly after another.<sup>46</sup>

All data has been reported anonymously. Data from the questionnaires has been reported as either absolute numbers or percentages, in both cases, unattributable to individual respondents. When reporting quotations or

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<sup>46</sup> When interviewing in locations other than close to Sheffield, I undertook a number of interviews in the same day and some at the same firm with often only 15 minutes in between.

paraphrasing individuals' comments or experiences, I have provided a brief description of the respondent. In the case of the gatekeepers, the description includes their profession and their position. For respondents to the in-depth interviews, I adopted a pseudonym for each and, after each quotation provided details on profession, age, gender, working practices and children, if any.

In annex six, a table providing details of each respondent has been provided containing information on professional, job title, working practices and household composition. All references to individuals' organisations and locations have been removed. Broader references to their geographical location, London, North West, etc. have been used instead.

### **Practical difficulties and limitations of the design**

As with all research studies, a number of practical difficulties were encountered in undertaking the research. Identifying and gaining access to suitable respondents was the first main difficulty. Persistence did, in some cases, pay off. Both professions have a number of special interest groups looking at issues such as training and education, diversity and working practices.

These groups were keen to take part in the research and were able to provide useful contacts for further information. Identifying a suitable population to whom to send the questionnaires proved more difficult. Whilst I had local support from the regional bodies of the two professions, this did not translate directly into support from their members.

This was made manifest in the relatively low response rates that I had at the first stage of the questionnaire distribution. Despite reminders sent at two intervals, response rates were lower than I had hoped.

By adopting the second approach to distribution, that of selecting organisations from professional publications and emailing employers, I was limiting my potential field of respondents to those employed rather than to all those in the professional area. In this way, it is possible that some professionals were under-represented in my data. It is also possible that, especially amongst the architects surveyed, those self employed were under-represented. Also, by contacting professional bodies and employers, I omitted from my sample those professionals who had left the profession due to problems in reconciling home

and work commitments. Whilst I picked up those who had moved from practice to teaching, this did not include those now working in other areas. One could argue that professionals are far less likely to leave their 'vocation' than other members of the labour force, but this was something that I was unable to explore in this research.

Potential gaps in the empirical evidence base are highlighted in the following chapters and it is to a detailed consideration of the data emerging from the questionnaire survey that this thesis now turns.

### **Accountants' and architects' professional and personal characteristics.**

Chapter four provided a detailed description of the methods utilised in this study. Using the grounded theory approach advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and refined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the research developed a number of inter-related approaches to gaining detailed information on the career progression and development of those working within the professions of architecture and accountancy.<sup>47</sup> Gatekeeper interviews with key informants were followed by questionnaire surveys and further in-depth face to face interviews<sup>48</sup>. Chapter four provided a full description of the gatekeepers interviewed as well as a consideration of the questions asked during those interviews, the questionnaire survey and the follow up in-depth face to face interviews. This chapter analyses and discusses, in detail, the data from the questionnaire survey and considers how the emerging evidence can be further explored in later chapters.

The survey aimed to provide an overarching view of how professionals had qualified for membership of their professions, how their careers had developed and how their working lives had developed and changed to allow for both the changing dynamics of the labour market and their changing non-work commitments. Information was gathered on the 'relational' dimension of labour market experiences, enabling comparisons to be made between the experiences of women professionals and their male counterparts. The collection of chronological information on work histories was accompanied by a more thematic series of questions on household formation and private/family commitments and responsibilities. These were designed to elicit detailed and comparable information on career development, career histories, qualifications and other work related details, as well as information on household construction, caring commitments and non-work issues. Thus it was intended

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<sup>47</sup> As discussed in chapter four, the grounded theory approach is not without its critics. This chapter explores the themes emerging from the grounded theory approach adopted for this study, with due consideration to the criticisms levelled at the approach by amongst others Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) and Ezzy (2002).

<sup>48</sup> Copies of all the research instruments used are included in the annexes.



that the data gathered from the questionnaires and later interviews would focus on the relationships between professionals and their professions, their organisations and their home life as well as on wider relationships between the professions and their patrons and the market. This would enable a wider consideration of the impact of economic rationalisation on the continuing development of the modern professions, developing the themes emerging in chapter three.

### **Career structures**

As outlined in chapter three, the professions of architecture and accountancy have very clear career structures. The gatekeeper interviews offer a picture of the majority of those joining the professions over the last 10 years coming straight from university, joining a graduate training programme or working in an assisting position and progressing through the various levels of the professions. The data gathered from the questionnaire surveys also reflect this. As table 5.1 demonstrates, all the architects who joined the profession within the last 10 years were educated to at least degree level compared with two thirds of accountants. When compared the figures for all survey respondents, it is apparent that entrants to the profession are now more highly qualified, reflecting the general shift to a more highly qualified population.

**Table 5.1: Highest qualifications of accountants and architects: all respondents compared with those joining between 1991 and 2001 (numbers)**

|                          | <b>Accountants (n=143)</b>   |            | <b>Architects (n=130)</b>    |            |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------------|
|                          | Those joining<br>1991 – 2001 | All        | Those joining<br>1991 – 2001 | All        |
| A' Level or equivalent   | 41                           | 66         | 0                            | 12         |
| Degree and higher degree | 102                          | 77         | 130                          | 118        |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>143</b>                   | <b>143</b> | <b>130</b>                   | <b>130</b> |

Source: The Architects and Accountants Survey, 2001<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> All tables without sources are from the survey data collected and analysed as part of this study

Table 5.2 shows how, over the past 5 years, the population as a whole has become more qualified. The proportion of the working age population with at least A' level or equivalent qualifications has increased by four per cent. The proportion with at least degree or equivalent level qualifications has increased from just over a fifth, to over a quarter.

**Table 5.2 Percentage of the working age population with at least NVQ Level 3 qualifications, 1999 and 2003**

|                            | 1999 | 2003 |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| NVQ Level 3 and equivalent | 41.2 | 45.1 |
| NVQ Level 4 and equivalent | 22.9 | 25.7 |

Source: Labour Force Survey, Quarterly Unadjusted Figures, Spring Quarters 1999 and 2003,

The career structures and processes outlined by the respondents can generally be characterised as a long period of education, followed by a trainee period leading to full qualification and accreditation, a junior post, associate post and senior/director post.

For both architects and accountants the standard training period, from starting university to becoming a fully chartered professional, lasts approximately seven years. Within architecture, this formal training period is followed by an assistant period lasting between one and six years, depending upon aptitude, ability and standard practices within the firm. Within some firms there are very 'flat' hierarchies. Architects, having received their charters, may work as architectural assistants for a number of years before being promoted to architect. In many firms, the title architect covers all levels of experience from junior posts to those just under the director or partner. In other firms attempts have been made to introduce a clearer hierarchy and sense of progression. In such firms junior architecture assistants progress to architects, then to associates, then to senior architects and finally and possibly to partner or director. Within such firms, management structures are also more clearly defined with staff management not the sole preserve of the director or a partner. 'Buddy' or mentor roles also exist, and a number of respondents included mentoring and staff management amongst their key work responsibilities.

The accountancy survey data also demonstrates a structured career pattern for respondents, with clear progression and hierarchies. Those in the public sector are more likely to move quickly (within 24 months or less) between same level positions, although they are not necessarily promoted more quickly. This may reflect the very large size of the public sector organisation surveyed and the large number of opportunities for movement. Even within a Big Four multi national accounting company, with a large number of opportunities for movement, junior staff are less likely to move during their trainee period than their counterparts in the public sector. Indeed, one accountant in a face to face interview stated that movements between jobs during this period would be viewed in a negative light by both current and any future employers. This difference can, however, be partly explained by longer established training programmes within the private sector organisations. A trainee entering one of the Big 4 graduate programmes would move around a number of disciplines during their training period, gaining experience in various aspects of auditing and working with a number of clients. Accountants also listed staff management as one of their key responsibilities.

**Table 5.3 Typical career path for an architect**

| <b>Position</b>                                                                    | <b>Length (years)</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Architectural assistant (training period for part two of three part qualification) | 1                     |
| Assistant architect (early qualifying period, part 3)                              | 2                     |
| Architect                                                                          | 6                     |
| Senior architect                                                                   | 3                     |
| Manager                                                                            | 2                     |

**Table 5.4 Typical career path for an accountant**

| <b>Position</b>       | <b>Length (years)</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Trainee accountant    | 1                     |
| Senior trainee        | 1                     |
| Assistant accountant  | 1                     |
| Senior accountant     | 2                     |
| Department Supervisor | 3                     |
| Manager               | 4                     |

Both the professions demonstrate well-established and developed career structures, as illustrated in tables 5.3 and 5.4 above. This chapter aims to explore the extent to which such career structures continue to develop and how issues such as a greater demand for non-standard working may impact on, or be hindered by, them.

### **Career progression**

Considering the accounting respondents in more detail, just under half of the respondents in junior and trainee positions had been in their current posts for less than two years, compared with two thirds of the middle level staff. Half of the senior level staff surveyed had been in their current position for under two years with 25 per cent having been in their senior position for 10 years or longer. At junior and middle manager levels the data illustrates a dynamic profession with accountants moving regularly both within their existing firm and to other organisations.

If one looks at time in current post by sex, at the senior level, equal numbers of males and females had been in their post for less than two years. The data demonstrated that, amongst those surveyed, movement into more senior posts appeared to be similar for both males and females. However, when analysing the longer tenures at senior level, double the number of males to females had been in post for longer than two years and at ten years and over. Males outnumber females by five to one, reflecting the dominance of males within long-term senior positions in accountancy and an overwhelming dominance of males in the higher echelons of the accounting profession. To use the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales as an example; reviewing their latest membership statistics, men still account for four fifths of membership<sup>50</sup>. This is similar to the figures for the architecture profession. Latest figures show that male RIBA members outnumber female by a ratio of almost 7:1<sup>51</sup>. The picture is changing quite rapidly. As table 5.5 demonstrates, over the last 10 years, the proportion of women members of the ICAEW has almost tripled.

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<sup>50</sup> Membership statistics from <http://www.icaew.co.uk>

<sup>51</sup> RIBA Information Centre

**Table 5.5 Membership of the ICAEW, 1984 – 2002 (%)**

|              | <b>1984</b>         | <b>1993</b>          | <b>2002</b>          |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Female       | 5,203 (6)           | 15,097 (14)          | 24,938 (20)          |
| Male         | 75,060 (94)         | 90,282 (86)          | 98,781 (80)          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>80,263 (100)</b> | <b>105,379 (100)</b> | <b>123,719 (100)</b> |

Source: ICAEW Membership Statistics, <http://www.icaew.co.uk/index>.

Table 5.6 illustrates data from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for latest available year<sup>52</sup>. As is evident from the data, men as a proportion of total RIBA membership outnumber women by almost 7:1. From this comparison of the main accountancy professional body (ICAEW) and the only architectural body, it is clear that, within the accountancy profession, the rate of entry for women into the profession is faster than the rate in the equivalent architectural body.

**Table 5.6 Membership of the RIBA, 2003 (%)**

|              | <b>2003</b>         |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Female       | 3,857 (13)          |
| Male         | 22,897 (87)         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>26,454 (100)</b> |

Source: RIBA Information Services

Within architecture, the survey data on career progression provided a picture of a profession with a well-established career path. Junior positions were generally held for two years or fewer, whilst more senior positions were likely to last for at least two years, with some of the architects surveyed having held their current positions for 10 years or longer. Just a quarter of the senior staff had been in their current position for less than two years with the majority having held their current post for five years. Again, if analysed by sex, all the female trainees had been in their current post for less than two years, compared with 50 per cent of males. All of the male middle level architects had been in their current post for between two and nine years compared with half of the women.

<sup>52</sup> I requested RIBA figures for corresponding years to those for the ICAEW data but did not receive them, and therefore used the most recent figures available on their website.

At the senior level, no women had held a senior post for 10 years or longer compared with a third of the males. Two thirds of the female senior staff had held their current post for less than two years. This again reflects the male dominance of senior posts within the profession, with female architects making only recent inroads into senior positions.

### **Qualifications**

One way in which professionals, compared with employees in other organisations, are able to maintain their position, is through the protection of a distinct body of knowledge. As a whole, professionals are more highly qualified than other workers. Extended periods of study characterise the two professions under examination, enabling them to exert influence via the 'merit of their office' (MacDonald, 1995) and the mastery of a body of knowledge (Torstendahl and Burrage, 1990). Amongst the survey respondents, qualifications were a key component of the professions' 'make up'. Architects were more likely than accountants to hold degree or post graduate level qualifications although this differed by age group.

#### *Architects' qualifications*

Architecture is increasingly a profession of graduates. Indeed, in the survey, all the architects under the age of 50 had degree or higher level qualifications, and three quarters of all respondents had postgraduate level qualifications, namely the Diploma in Architecture, the qualification awarded after seven years of study. Less than one tenth of the architects surveyed did not have a degree. Those who recorded their highest qualification as A' level were all aged over 50, and had experienced well-structured career paths. Their junior posts had lasted longer than those of more recent entrants to the profession. On average, the non-graduate architects had junior posts of 5 years, compared with two years in a junior assistant post for the graduates. Table 5.7 below illustrates the career histories of two current directors of architecture practices. The table highlights the differences in length of time that the two directors (one a graduate and one not) spent at each level of the professional hierarchy before promotion. The table illustrates the longer period of time spent in junior and middle level positions by the non-graduate. The picture is broadly similar for the accountants surveyed.

**Table 5.7 Comparison of career structures for graduate and non-graduate entrants to the architecture profession**

| <b>Position</b>     | <b>Graduate entrant<br/>time in position (yrs)</b> | <b>Non-graduate entrant<br/>time in position (yrs)</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Assistant architect | 2                                                  | 4                                                      |
| Architect           | 6                                                  | 11                                                     |
| Senior Architect    | 15                                                 | 20                                                     |
| Director            | 6                                                  | 10                                                     |

*Accountants' qualifications*

As shown in table 5.8, for the accountants surveyed, over half of the respondents were educated to at least degree level. Compared with the architects, however, more accountants recorded their highest qualification as A' level, (two thirds of accountants compared with under a tenth of architects).

**Table 5.8 Comparison of accountants' and architects' qualifications (numbers)**

|               | <b>Accountants<br/>n=143</b> | <b>Architects<br/>n=130</b> |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 'A' Level     | 63                           | 9                           |
| Degree        | 64                           | 23                          |
| Post Graduate | 13                           | 98                          |
| Other         | 3                            | 0                           |

All accountants aged 54 or above recorded A' level as their highest qualification. The accountancy profession still recruits a number of non-graduates, although the practice is less common than 10 years ago.

**Table 5.9 Highest qualification by age (numbers)**

|               | <b>Accountants<br/>(n=143)</b> |              |            | <b>Architects<br/>(n=130)</b> |              |            |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|
|               | <b>25-34</b>                   | <b>35-54</b> | <b>54+</b> | <b>25-34</b>                  | <b>35-54</b> | <b>54+</b> |
| 'A' Level     | 13                             | 20           | 7          | 0                             | 0            | 13         |
| Degree        | 20                             | 44           | ~          | 0                             | 2            | 13         |
| Post graduate | 4                              | 9            | ~          | 32                            | 52           | 13         |
| Other         | ~                              | 2            | ~          | 0                             | ~            | 0          |

Between 1998 and 2003, the percentage of the working age population with qualifications at NVQ level 3 or above rose from 39 per cent to 44.<sup>53</sup> The picture of the accounting profession, emerging from the survey data, is of a profession more highly qualified and expecting high levels of qualification, and this is confirmed in the evidence. For example, Firm A, one of the Big 4, has, as a minimum requirement for trainee accountants, an upper second class degree along with at least 22 points at A' level or equivalent (Inside Careers, 2001). A senior human resources manager at Firm A, interviewed as part of the Gatekeeper interviews stated that the entrance requirements had been increasing over the last 10 years as greater numbers of highly qualified students were applying for training positions. Firm A felt that an upper second or first class degree, along with a high number of A' level points, demonstrated academic excellence.

### *Qualifications by age*

The survey data for the architects by also suggests that junior posts last a shorter length of time now, compared with fifteen to twenty years ago. On average, architecture respondents aged 35 and under had held assistantships that lasted 3 years, compared with those aged 45 and over whose assistantships had lasted on average 5 years. All the architects I interviewed, face to face, both at senior and junior levels, mentioned the changing academic profile of entrants. Senior architects often bemoaned the lowering of standards within the formalised education system, claiming that junior architects were less well prepared, in technical or practical skills, to undertake relatively simple tasks.

*"Yes, I think it's disappointing how education has gone, and I don't think that's because it was too ambitious in the past. I don't think it was. It used to be a very well rounded series of modular courses, on most courses. Some courses were a bit more design led, but it covered most aspects of social and professional, you've even got people [now] after three years who don't know what it takes to get a drawing done."* Senior Architect, London practice.

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<sup>53</sup> Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring quarterly series, 1998-2003



More junior architects felt that their period in education offered them a wider perspective on architecture. Their comments referred not simply to having technical or design abilities, but also to having an understanding of the role of the built environment within the wider society, and being able to translate this understanding into practical, suitable designs.

Within accounting, the junior posts across all age groups, had lasted around three years for the past fifteen to twenty years. However, it is widely acknowledged across the profession, and in the firms surveyed, that new entrants are becoming more highly qualified. Most candidates for trainee posts have at least an upper second class degree and a high number of A' level points. Some firms recruit from specific universities, others sift their candidates using multi day interview panels and aptitude tests. Whilst some claim this ensures that only the most able candidates get through, this trend also reinforces the image of the profession as one that is highly selective and elitist.

### **Professional qualifications held and those expected by the employer**

As discussed in chapter three, professions maintain their elite position within society through the production and reproduction of professional norms and values. Larson (1977) argues that one of the most important stages of professional formation is the production of the producers. Professional entrance requirements can be used as one measure of a profession's value, and can be used to restrict access to the profession, thereby maintaining its status. To establish whether such processes could be identified in the two professions under consideration, both the architects and the accountants were asked to list the qualifications specified by their employers as essential for their current position.

The qualifications listed correlated strongly with the position held. Thus, junior architects listed the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) exams, parts one, two and three, whilst trainee accountants listed degree or 'A' level qualifications. More senior architects listed membership of RIBA and

architectural experience, whilst others listed membership of the Architects Registration Board (ARB).<sup>54</sup>

The senior accountants listed membership of a professional body such as the ICAEW<sup>55</sup> or CIPFA. Directors and partners were more likely to list fellowship of a chartered accounting body as an essential criterion for their current position. For an accountant to practice and undertake audits, he or she must be a member of a professional body. The accountants listed membership of a number of different professional bodies, (a list of the bodies is included in the Annex). Whilst the ICAEW and CIMA are two of the most well recognised professional accounting bodies, there is not one, single body that the majority belong to (unlike RIBA in the case of architects). Most accountants listed membership of a number of bodies, reflecting their varying specialisms within the accounting profession. Membership types did not differ for those with non-standard working patterns. Membership of these bodies differs according to professional seniority. More junior members of the profession will hold a general level of membership whilst senior members of the profession often listed fellowship of the professional bodies, providing them with a greater level of influence within the body and conferring greater status on them as professionals.

The accountancy profession thus lacks a single body (comparable to the RIBA in architecture) to guide the profession in terms of ethics, professional standards, training and education. This makes it harder for accountancy to develop common guidelines relating to working practices and policies. The 'Workplace' group, which encourages accounting practices to offer and support more family friendly practices, is located within the wider ICAEW professional body. The dominance of large accounting firms which offer clear organisational as well as professional career paths and which develop and maintain their own professional guidelines and standards further complicates matters.

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<sup>54</sup> For architects to practice and call themselves architects, they must be members of the ARB. That this is not listed as essential by all respondents can in part be explained by a number of respondents seeing it as implicit in their job title and thus not listing it separately. The Architects Registration Board (ARB) was established by statute in 1997, and is the independent regulator for the architects' profession in the United Kingdom. It has a dual mandate to protect the interest of consumers and to safeguard the reputation of architects.

<sup>55</sup> details of all the professional groups are included in annex one

Membership of professional bodies nevertheless remains a key requirement for both professions. Within architecture, membership of the RIBA is not mandatory for practising architects. Not all those surveyed are members, and some interviewees saw membership of RIBA as an expensive non-essential. Whilst RIBA govern the curriculum of the schools of architecture, and act as a professional standard setter, survey respondents, especially those in the younger age groups, demonstrated some reluctance to be an individual member of the body. All architects surveyed as part of the questionnaire survey worked for firms who had some staff who were members of RIBA. It was common for older, more senior members of staff to be members of the body.

For some respondents, including a number working non-standard hours, self employed or on a career break, the annual fee of £200 was felt to be prohibitive. Conversely, some of the older, more established architects were not only members of RIBA but also active members of local and national councils and committees. Those active members who were interviewed face to face commented that membership enabled them to pursue specific professional interests. One architect, interested in sustainable design, felt that membership of RIBA's national committee for sustainable development would enable him to have a level of influence in that area. Another, keen to push for greater family friendly awareness within the profession, saw active participation in RIBA as the only way to achieve her goal of raising the profile of family friendly policies. Both architects commented that the only way to make a change at a profession level was to change things from within.

The RIBA insignia and authority are seen by some to represent the achievement of a certain level of professionalism, demonstrating to the wider community that services carried out by a member of RIBA meet certain standards. To others the RIBA is an irrelevance;

*"That's why a lot of the profession are disillusioned with RIBA and they don't see that RIBA has anything to do with the realities of their lives. We recently had elections for the president of RIBA and I think it was dismal, it was something like, um, less than 20 per cent or something went out to vote. Some incredibly low number went to vote and, um, I don't know, it's because people just, as one person in Building Design put it, 'I don't care who's elected, its got nothing to do with me. I just want the words chartered after my name'." Associate architect, mid thirties*

The accountants interviewed during the face to face interviews did not express dissatisfaction with their professional bodies. They were more likely to be unhappy with certain aspects of their employers' practices than with the professional bodies. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) is viewed as the 'gold standard' by many of its members. Some respondents who worked within the public sector or management accounting, continued to pay their ICAEW annual fees themselves because they felt that membership of that professional body demonstrated a greater level of ability than membership of a body representing the field in which they were currently working.

When one respondent was asked what membership of the ICAEW meant to him, he commented that membership to the body offered them the choice of a number of career paths. Movement outside the profession, into industry was possible with ICAEW membership. Membership of the body was seen to confer status on its holder.

*"I think it's a tremendous qualification in that it gives people, I tell this to people, you see I used to be a local [accounting] career adviser. Once you've got the qualification, you've then really got a choice about how you want to proceed. You don't have to stay in the profession, you can go into industry. If you look at the top 100 companies, you'll find that a lot of them have chartered accountants on the board, so there's a lot of scope. And within the accountancy field, I'm a general practitioner but a lot of people specialise in tax or insolvency or all sorts of areas. I just think that it's a very flexible qualification, very well respected."* Partner in accounting firm, mid fifties, active member of local association of professional body.

In the face to face interviews some accountants identified more closely with their organisation than with their profession, a phenomenon highlighted in other research within the finance sector (Crompton and Harris 1998). These individuals were considering leaving their professional group, although remaining within their organisation. They were less likely to have a close attachment to their profession and more likely to see it as a job rather than a vocation. Intra-professional career moves and moves into related, peripheral careers are dealt with in more detail in chapters six and seven.

## Training within the professions

As well as representing members of professions, professional groups also play a large part in determining the sort of training that their members and students should undertake. From accrediting schools of architecture to determining the curriculum of trainee accountants, professional bodies have a wide remit within the arena of professional training and education. The maintenance and protection of a distinct body of knowledge is central to the development and maintenance of a professional group. Differentiation from other allied and para-professions enables a profession to maintain, and at times extend, its favoured position and area of work. Continued membership of the RIBA and accounting bodies is dependent upon a number of factors: the holding of a professional qualification; payment of subscriptions; and the completion of a stipulated number of hours of training. Continued professional development can involve attendance at lectures, seminars, training courses and reading professional literature. Just under half the architects surveyed were currently undertaking training. The majority of these listed continuing professional development (CPD) as their main area of training. Many practices organise regular training events for their staff. Other training being undertaken included the RIBA part three, leading to full professional accreditation (being undertaken by some of the junior assistants); Masters degrees in arts or technical related courses; computer aided design, and project management.

In the questionnaire survey just over a third of accountants were undertaking training. Junior and trainee level respondents were undertaking professional body certification exams, whilst the majority of others were studying for higher level management and management accounting qualifications. Most of those undertaking training were able to use some of their work time to study. As shown in table 5.10, across the two professions, women were more likely to be undertaking training than men.

**Table 5.10 Survey respondents undertaking training, by sex and profession (%)**

|        | <b>Accountants</b> | <b>Architects</b> |
|--------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Female | 38                 | 31                |
| Male   | 28                 | 28                |

Source: Accountants and Architects Survey 2001, question "Are you currently undertaking training?"

A third of the architects had their fees paid by their employer, a fifth studied in their own time at their own expense, and a third received a mixture of time off and fees paid by their employer. All accountants had fees provided by their employer, and more than three-quarters were able to use some work time for study, as well as studying in their own time.

When analysed by employment status, over nine tenths of those accountants and architects undertaking training were working full time.

### **Employment status**

A key issue in this study has been to ascertain the extent to which adopting different working practices impacts on career progression and development. The surveys therefore looked at working practices, tenures of employment, working hours and planned changes to working hours.

Of those surveyed, over 90 per cent of architects and accountants were working as employees. Of those employees, ten per cent of accountants were also working as self employed on other contracts, compared with eleven per cent of architects. Nine per cent of accountants were solely self-employed. These figures are slightly lower than the national average across all occupations. According to the Labour Force Survey<sup>56</sup>, the self-employed represent over twelve per cent of all those in employment. The majority of architects in the UK are employed in practices with fewer than 10 staff, and so the surveyed figure of nine per cent self-employed working solely on a self employed basis may be an under representation of the profession as a whole. This can be explained by the survey having been sent to the top 100 practices (in size and annual income) in the country.

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<sup>56</sup> Labour Force Survey, Spring Quarter 2003, Office for National Statistics

## Working hours

The average weekly hours worked by the architects surveyed varied between 25 and 55, with the mean average at 41 hours. This average differed by sex, with men recording an average working week of 43 hours, compared with 40 hours for women. Thus the architect respondents were working slightly longer hours than the national average<sup>57</sup>, of 40 hours for men and 38 hours for women. Within accountancy, the average weekly hours were 40, varying from 21 to 60. When analysed by sex, male respondents worked an average of 42 hours per week compared with 37 hours for women<sup>58</sup>.

Just over a third of all respondents indicated that they were considering changing their working hours over the next five years. Of the architects considering changes to their hours, 90 per cent were currently working full time, compared with 80 per cent of accountants. Amongst the accountants, two thirds of those working part time (all women) were looking to change their hours, returning to full-time, or near full-time, employment. All cited their children reaching key stages (such as school, secondary school) as key reasons for wanting to increase their hours.

Amongst the architects considering such changes, just under half gave childcare or family responsibilities as the primary reason, while over a third were moving towards retirement, just under a tenth wanted to reduce hours to concentrate on training, whilst just over a tenth wanted to reduce hours to improve their health or take a career break. Unfortunately, this latter finding could not be picked up in later face to face interviews, as none of those indicating, in their questionnaires, that they wished to reduce their working hours in order to improve their health or take time away from work agreed to take part in the later face to face interviews. Over 90 per cent of those surveyed were working full time. No male respondents said they were working part time although just under 10 per cent of males were considering moving to part time hours. These male respondents listed childcare as the reason for making a move to part time hours. None of the architects surveyed indicated

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<sup>57</sup> from Social Trends, 33 Spring 2002, Office for National Statistics. The figure represents an average of hours worked in the reference week, including paid and unpaid overtime both for employees and self employed, covering full time and part time hours.

<sup>58</sup> The figures represent hours actually worked rather than contracted hours

that they were thinking of leaving the profession. One respondent stated that he was considering moving teaching in a school of architecture. He was unsure of whether to combine part-time practice work with part-time teaching in order to broaden his working remit and meet his home commitments. Recent research<sup>59</sup> (Graft-Johnson, Manley and Greed 2003) has reported a number of key reasons for women leaving the architecture profession. These included: feeling sidelined as a professional; being denied promotion after returning from maternity leave; having limited opportunities to work more flexibly; and feeling that the profession valued the more 'macho' culture of long hours; 'over-nighter' work shifts; and general sexism. None of the women in the Graft-Johnson et al survey indicated that they were leaving architecture out of a lack of professional competence, or a feeling of having chosen the wrong career.

Among the accountants surveyed for my research, almost a half cited childcare or family responsibilities as a reason for wanting to decrease their working hours; a fifth were moving towards retirement. Two respondents cited issues including health problems that were exacerbated by long working hours, and another two were looking to change career or considering a change to their career. One respondent felt that the accountancy profession was not suited to those needing to balance childcare with work commitments, and that promotion was not available to women who did not work long hours. She was taking two months out to spend time with her children and consider her career options. Two thirds of those looking to reduce their hours due to childcare commitments were female. Three quarters of those looking to move to retirement were male, reflecting the higher incidence of males in the senior accounting positions within the survey data. Equal numbers of males and females were looking to reduce their hours for health reasons, with both sexes citing the detrimental effects that long hours were having on their health and quality of life.

### **Balancing home and work**

The central role that family formation and childcare plays in career development and progression, especially for women, is one that will be

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<sup>59</sup> The research undertaken by the University of the West of England funded by RIBA involved a questionnaire survey of 174 women working in architecture practice and in academia, students



considered in chapters six and seven. Here I concentrate on the data from the surveys, which demonstrates that career patterns and structures within the professions are dynamic, and change according to external as well as internal influences. The impact of key life stages such as family formation, childrearing and elder care on labour market participation means that workers, and especially women, often go through a series of employment contracts. A common pattern includes full time employment until children are born, then a career break or shortened hours, followed by further part time working hours until children reach junior or secondary school years. As later chapters show, this pattern was common to a number of the female respondents and further negates the notion of a 'standard' or 'traditional' set of working patterns for women. Two males, both within the architecture profession, were also moving towards similar working patterns. Both had chosen to shorten their working hours in order to meet childcare responsibilities, and both saw this change as a temporary phase until their children reached school age, when their working patterns could be shaped around the school hours. Another male respondent had also changed his working hours in order to meet childcare needs. Although he had not cut his hours, he scheduled his working day around dropping his children off at school and picking them up and taking them to a childminder at the end of the school day.

## **Childcare**

As more women have moved into the labour market, childcare has emerged as a key barrier to further labour market engagement. Surveyed respondents were asked about the ages of their children and childcare previously and currently used. Over two thirds of architects had children, with the majority being of school age. A significant minority also had children currently in higher education, and indicated that this had implications for their chosen working patterns. Some reported that they would retire once university fees had been paid for. Amongst the accountants, just under half had children. Just under two thirds of the children were aged under 8.

Respondents with children were asked about the forms of childcare they were currently using, or had used in the past. Amongst the architects, the most common forms of childcare used were childminders and nurseries, along with partners providing some of the childcare. Accountants were more likely to use more informal provision by family/friends, followed by childminders and nurseries; after school clubs were another common form of childcare. Other forms included au pairs or nannies and holiday play schemes.

Chapters six and seven discuss the numerous difficulties experienced by professionals trying to balance the competing priorities of home and work in selecting childcare which meets their differing work demands. Both architects and accountants stated that their working hours could be unpredictable, with last minute demands on their time necessitating last minute changes to their working hours. They therefore needed flexible, reliable childcare.

Affordable childcare is an issue across the country.<sup>60</sup> For the majority my interviewees, access to suitable and affordable childcare was a key issue in shaping working practices. They had used, or were using, or were using, a number of childcare options, which ran the whole gamut of provision including nurseries, childminders, au pairs, after school clubs and private schools offering provision before and after school.

A male architect in his late thirties, with two children under three, provided a detailed breakdown of his own and his wife's income and expenditure to illustrate how their decisions concerning working practices and childcare had been made.

*"I dug this out, [outline of income and expenditure], this is quite interesting, this is, I did this analysis actually just before we, um, before we had the last child. I mean, we actually, I did this actually for one of my last staff reviews because I've actually been trying to explain to the practice here why I can't actually afford to stay working in London, but, we actually worked out that that was our, the top figure is our sort of nett income which is not a bad figure in national terms, we're not paid badly and my wife earns more than I do, she's a lawyer, a young lawyer, she's been qualified a couple of years whereas I've been*

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<sup>60</sup> According to figures provided by the Daycare Trust (July 2003) the typical cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under two is £128 a week, more than £6,650 a year; up 6.7per cent since 2002. In some parts of the country, particularly London and the South East the cost of a nursery place is much higher - typically £168 a week in inner London or over £8730 a year.

*qualified from 1990 or something. The childcare is the killer and the mortgage potential....So we've got two kids and two of us and we're professional people and we're living with the parents. Its kind of a strange position to be in, but no, we looked at buying something and we just worked out that there was no way we thought, and that's without mortgage payment which other people of our age are doing. So yeah, that's what it is and so the outcome of this, the outcome of doing this analysis is that from the beginning of July I'm going to work three days a week and my wife works four so we only have to cover two days of childcare. But on the days that they go to childcare, I work for about £20 a day which covers my travel just about and a sandwich at lunchtime, so."* Male architect, mid thirties, two children under three.

He highlighted the costs of childcare and housing in the South East, which limited the amount of paid employment he and his wife could choose to do. He complained that professionals were spending years and money training in specialised occupational areas, only to find that, when they were fully qualified and experienced, and thus valuable in terms of human capital, they were actually better off reducing their working hours, paying less tax and achieving less in terms of career advancement. This architect's experience was echoed by other respondents. As shown in chapters six and seven, attempts to balance the often conflicting demands of work and caring responsibilities impacted negatively on career development, opportunities for promotion and access to training.

It has recently been argued (Daycare Trust 2003) that a third of women do not return to work after maternity leave because of the costs of childcare. As I argued in chapter three, the professions continue to be shaped by economic as well as social factors. The role that rational economic choices play in career decisions does, and will continue to, play a large part in the development and make up of professions. Any analysis of professional development and individual professional projects must take account, therefore, not only of factors such as qualifications, membership of professional bodies and continued professional training and development, but also of the 'external' issues that impact on development. Such factors may include economic decisions; caring commitments; and choices of working practices. I now turn towards more detailed considerations of how issues of family formation, changing caring duties and decisions to adopt non-standard working practices impact on career progression and

### **Non standard working: a form of time deviance?**

The last chapter examined the working histories and patterns of architects and accountants using both the questionnaire interview data. This chapter examines notions of time deviance, 'macho' cultures of long hours and attitudes towards part time working. It begins with a discussion of the economic rationale governing many of the career decisions made both by the interviewees from this study and from related research.

### **Economic rationalisation and working practices: the case of the professions**

As discussed in the first three chapters, economic rationalisation has been critically important in the development of the modern labour market. By 'the modern labour market' I refer principally to developments following the industrial revolution through to the contemporary situation. The development of the modern professions was heavily shaped by economic rationalisation.

In the last chapter, economic as well as personal considerations about home and work (especially childcare) were shown to have significant impact on respondents' career development choices, opportunities and decisions. These decisions, and the wider ramifications of the choices made, continue to have an impact on the development of the professions of architecture and accountancy. In my study, some respondents commented that increased competition had led to pressure to work longer hours and to prove 'commitment' to the organisation. There is a high degree of competition at all levels of the professions, including competition within and between companies, and this affects the way in which professionals work together. In both professions, my respondents, employees and the self-employed, reported that increased levels of competition had led to less co-operation between firms and practitioners and to a sense that one needed to 'protect one's patch'. This belief was particularly voiced in smaller firms and by sole practitioners. Diversification within the professions has added to a greater level of competition between firms and between professions and this has enabled

some respondents to broaden their skills bases, in one sense 'up-skilling'. Conversely, however, diversification could lead to the down-grading of formerly important professional skills. One architect, believed that moves into the wider design field were weakening her employer's standing within the professional field.

As Devine (1999) has argued, client loyalty is now more transient, with respect for the professions replaced by a search for value for money, spurred on in part by market emphases on 'contracting out' and securing 'best value'. In a buoyant economy, employee mobility has also increased. Many employers have responded by seeking out those new entrants, perceived to have the potential for reaching levels of professional seniority, and promoting them rapidly to keep them in the firm. In the competition for clients and for market share, and in aiming for promotion, many employees have, for their part, adopted highly 'visible' long hours working patterns in order to take advantage of the professional opportunities offered by their employing organisations.

This chapter, and that following, draw on the in-depth interviews with a sample of the respondents to the survey to consider professional development issues in more depth. In particular the chapters consider the impact that decisions to adopt different working practices have on career development.

### **Non-standard working: the symbolic use of time.**

As indicated in chapter two, there is a growing body of literature on the symbolic use of time within the labour market and on the notion of non-standard working as a form of time deviance (Epstein et al 1999, 2001, Mennino 2002, Wharton 2002, Stier 2003). This has highlighted the significance of social norms and attitudes concerning time and the use of time.

Time spent in paid employment has traditionally been structured by cultural mores and values. More recently, developments in information technology, including the expansion in the numbers of home computers, and remote access to computer networks and email, have continued to shape and influence the division of home and work time. Historically, as the industrial revolution brought many home based cottage industries into a formalised workplace, the idea of clear 'clocking on and off' times became important, and

working time became more clearly linked to wages. The economic rationalisation of time and labour had occurred<sup>61</sup>.

Some of the recent literature on non-standard working explores how changes to working practices and hours of work have been developed by employers to meet the growing demands of the economy, and to provide more cost-effective ways of undertaking the work tasks. Atkinson (1987) explored how employers in the manufacturing sector had developed 'flexible firms' that comprised a core workforce, often highly skilled and employed on a full time basis, and a peripheral workforce that would be brought in when demand exceeded the capacity of the core workforce. Whilst many of the changes to working time are most clearly visible in the manufacturing and service sectors (e.g. shift working), the need to meet demand and compete within the market is also a strong driver for longer working hours within the professions. This is illustrated through a series of interviews I undertook with managers in a large accounting firm. Interviewees argued that movements towards greater flexibility, such as changes to IT, and remote access to the company's computer systems, were being driven principally by the need to serve clients more efficiently, rather than to meet the needs of employees. This accounting firm was part of a multinational company with staff often involved in international projects that required 'anti-social hours' working. By providing remote access to their computer systems, the company facilitated the joint working of accountants across time zones, and often required working well after the standard '9 till 5' hours.

Technological changes<sup>62</sup> not only affect working practices but also have an impact on employers' expectations of working hours and on out of office contact. A number of respondents commented that improvements to IT meant that they were contactable during their non-work time and saw this as an acceptable way of balancing their work and home lives. Importantly, they also saw these as a way of supporting their applications to work non-standard hours, or flexibly. In the following comment, an architect who works on a part

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<sup>61</sup> Since the Industrial Revolution and a general movement towards formalised workplaces, regimes and working hours, time has been used as a principal determinant of wage level. This is however, historically specific and potentially changeable.

<sup>62</sup> Such changes include the development of the Internet, email, remote access computer networks, video conferencing and mobile phones

time basis explained that remote access to his office computer enabled him to remain in contact with the office on his non-working day. His ability to remain in contact had formed part of his 'business case' for moving to part time hours. Here, the respondent does not see office contact on a non work day as an infringement of his personal time. Indeed, the availability of IT underpinned many respondents' view, that the use of email and mobile phones was an ideal way to remain in contact with the office on days off, and justified their applications for, and uses of, non-standard working hours. Thus a blurring of home and work boundaries was seen as a realistic way of achieving a home and work balance.

*"I take my laptop home and I can plug in and access all the emails and talk to people on the telephone, and just because I'm not physically strapped to a table upstairs, that's not a problem and the fact that I'm not in the office but am at home, I could be out of the office at a meeting for another job so people who have an urgent message or have something they want dealt with urgently, then I'm contactable. You can just plug your laptop in at home and you're away."* (Male architect, mid thirties, moving to part time hours, two children under two years old).

There is no indication in the quotation above, or indeed in other interviews with respondents within architecture and accounting, that the new IT services were resented as an invasion of home life or as a way of the employing organisations infringing employees' personal time. However, one respondent, also an architect, commented that, because she had been frequently working at home on her non work days, and working into the evening on most work days, she had decided to move back to full time hours. She stated that these additional unpaid hours had led her to move back to full time employment, but did not explicitly state whether the move was also brought about by her youngest child reaching primary school age and thus no longer needing full time childcare.

*"I was practically working full time hours so I decided that I might at least get paid for them."* Female architect, mid forties, full time hours, two children of secondary school age.

### **The growth in 'greedy' institutions**

Boundaries between work and home are becoming further blurred. The expectation that professionals will be 'on-call' is increasing, helped along by

developments in IT and mobile telephones. Epstein et al (2001) argues that these are 'time greedy institutions':

*"Today, many observers note that more and more institutions have become greedy and ask the kind of time commitment of their employees that only the most professionally identified offered in the past." (Epstein ibid: 8)*

In my study, a human resources manager in one accounting firm argued that the company expected a high level of input from its employees in return for good conditions.

*"The idea of flexible working is that if you give your all, then we'll be flexible where we can."*

Bond et al (2003), in their study of flexible working practices in the Scottish finance sector, found that such working practices were offered in order to retain valuable staff rather than to attract them. Their research found that managers considered individual circumstances, levels of performance and commitment before agreeing to changes in working practices. Yeandle et al's research (2003) into line managers and family friendly employment found that, although formal organisational policies provided the framework for flexible working, implementation was uneven and often occurred on an informal basis. Similarly, in my study, within the large accounting organisation surveyed, formal policies on flexible working did exist, but implementation was dealt with at a local level on a case by case basis. One respondent, on a training contract at the firm in question, had moved to flexible hours. She commented that few of her colleagues had realised that this provision existed.

*"When my colleagues started finding out, they said 'I didn't know you could do that', so although it's there written on paper for them, or on internet, it's not common knowledge. It's not part of the culture to promote that. I think I was the first student ever to get flexi time or something." Female accountant, late twenties, using flexible hours, two children aged 3 and 6.*

For this respondent to move to flexible hours, she had had to submit a business case to support her request. This was prior to the legal changes



regarding flexible working policies, implemented in April 2003<sup>63</sup>. The senior partners interviewed her and made it clear to her that her working hours would be reconsidered as she moved towards the end of her training period.

*"It's just like when you apply for a job. You have to fill in an application form with the pros and cons and you put your business case forward for why you think it's going to work, and what problems you anticipate you're going to face and the consequences of your working arrangements. That has to be sent to HR people, and also be approved by a local director."*  
Female accountant, late twenties, using flexible hours, two children aged 3 and 6.

Some organisations view flexible working as a 'reward' for hard work or commitment, rather than as a system open to all employees irrespective of their home or work commitments. As the quotations above and the research, suggest, levels of awareness of policies available at an organisational level may not be very high amongst the majority of staff and thus take up of such provision is likely to be piecemeal. 'Greedy' institutions are based on a voluntary commitment from their members and can form the core social identity for their workers. The additional time invested in such an institution is often unremunerated.

Paid employment is, of course, not the only component of an individual's life to place additional demands on them. The majority of respondents who were working non-standard hours experienced some level of conflict between their work and home commitments. Indeed, the need to juggle the competing demands of work and family life was, for many, the chief reason for moving to non-standard hours. One respondent commented that, after moving into her new job, both she and her partner experienced increased demands on their time. To meet the working time requirements of her employers, her partner

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<sup>63</sup> From 6 April 2003 parents of children aged under six or of disabled children aged under 18 have had the right to apply to work flexibly providing they have the qualifying length of service. Under the amended 1996 Employment Rights Act, employers will have a statutory duty to consider any applications seriously. The regulations are: 2002 Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) Regulations and the 2002 Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations. The right enables mothers and fathers to request to work flexibly. It is up to the employee to make a considered application in writing. They are only able to make one application a year under the right, and accepted applications will mean a permanent change to the employee's own terms and conditions of employment unless otherwise agreed between both parties. Source: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/>

also needed to compromise in terms of his work, so that their childcare commitments could be met. Both she and her husband have subsequently moved to more flexible hours to balance these competing demands.

*"I started work in September last year [2001], and by May we were struggling at home and my husband was saying 'I really need you to be more flexible', because he was the one that have to give all the flexibility, and compromise his job, and he was stressed and I was always the one who was starting on time and leaving on time."* Female accountant, late twenties, works part time hours, one pre-school age child.

Brandth (2001) argues that the family can be included, alongside employers, in the category of greedy institutions.

*"The family is an example of one such institution, as it poses never-ending demands and never receives adequate time and attention."* (2001: 253)

As indicated in chapter two, Hochschild (1997) pioneered discussion of the idea of the family as a greedy institution, arguing that many US workers choose to work longer hours to avoid the constraints and increasing demands placed on them by the home and family. My respondents did not report that their family time was restricting, or that time spent at work was more supportive than time at home. Rather, the majority (both male and female) reported that they wanted to spend more time on non-work activities including caring responsibilities, but also included training, further studies and travel. Indeed, respondents voiced some degree of resentment at the amount of time they were expected to commit to their employment. Many argued that the majority of their work could be undertaken in the standard 37 hours of a working week, but that organisational culture required them to work much longer hours.

*"The culture in the office is all work, work, work, work, work. Although it's not openly so, it's unofficially that way."* Male architect, early thirties, full time hours, no children.

The idea of the family as a greedy institution is one firmly embedded in cultural systems of values and mores. As indicated above, none of the respondents commented that they found their family life restrictive. They all highlighted that they would value more time to spend with their families. There are however,

complex systems of cultural expectations tied up with considerations of the role of caring and nurturing, especially when related to women and childcare responsibilities. Cultural expectations that, for example, a young child is best cared for by their mother, will conflict with views on professional commitment and the need to display 'suitable' levels of commitment to both their home and work lives. Whilst the respondents do not express any levels of resentment towards the time spent in their caring duties, they do indicate levels of conflict between their expectations of their roles as carers and as professionals. The research highlighted the differences between the official policies promoted at the top of the organisations and the actual implementation and promotion of working practices at the operational level. The majority of respondents perceived that, whilst managers and senior representatives of the professional bodies advocated the need for more family friendly employment practices, 'real' decision making power rested with the middle managers. Added to that was competition from peers, eager for promotion, to work longer hours. The sense of competition between professionals, especially those new to their firms, was common to the majority of the respondents.

*"The problem isn't because people above you are asking you to do it, it's because people at the bottom, especially the ones that want to be promoted. They will work so hard, because they want to be promoted and they have quite a lot of work, to be fair to them. It's the thing that, if you're in a job and you see a manager working long hours, you as a team member feel that you ought to."* Female architect, mid twenties, looking to move to part time hours, no children.

One of the key ways in which 'commitment' to the profession and organisation has been displayed, both by my respondents and, reportedly, by their colleagues, is through long working hours.

### **Visibility in the workplace and the long hours culture**

The long hours' culture and 'visibility', the idea of being the first in and last out of the workplace, is important in many workplaces. The value of visibility goes beyond the monetary value associated with hours worked, and also includes the perceived value of a community of similar workers, socialising and working together.

The accountants commented that, as new entrants, they were expected to work and socialise together. Across the profession, and especially in the very large, multi national companies, new entrants were expected to commit themselves fully to their new posts. Trainee accountants were generally aware of the working practices of other organisations, and it was 'assumed' that the first two years of employment, post university, would involve very long office hours coupled with post-work socialising.

The picture was the same amongst architects, who also commented that they were expected to work long hours. One recently qualified architect commented that, whilst still qualifying and undertaking assignments at university, architecture students had been expected to work through the night whilst finishing designs for mock competitions. Tutors had commented that this would stand them in good stead for actual competition work in practice. A director of an architecture practice agreed that working hours had increased, a result of increased competition for projects.

*"The time that we would traditionally have had to provide the [design and bid] information is shrunk, so for less money we have to work in a shorter period of time. It does make it very difficult as a programme, so people do end up working long hours, that's not just with [client] but all the other projects seem to have got much faster. Projects now, they're expected to be delivered in very short periods of time."* Female architect, mid fifties, working full time, two grown up children.

### **A culture of long hours**

A partner in another architecture practice commented on the culture, amongst many members of staff, of working long hours. This was not only in order to meet the short deadlines for design bids but also, it was opined, to compete with colleagues in terms of workplace visibility (female architect, partner in small firm, early forties, two school age children). Epstein, in an study of female lawyers experiences of part time working in the US, states that:

*"The symbolic uses of time go far beyond its mandatory value and its demarcation of work time and off time. Its use is determined both by the culture and the structure of a society and, as stated above, by individuals' different abilities to use time. At the cultural level, most societies use time designations as a way of making boundaries between spheres of*

Such expectations include an increasing incidence of long hours. Long hours, as other writers have demonstrated, are seen as necessary and a 'natural' part of professional life (Harkness 1999, Wharton 2000). Within both accountancy and architecture the culture of being 'first in, last out' of the office is widespread. Most respondents believed this to be an inevitable part of professional life, but none endorsed it as a means of gaining promotion or development opportunities. It was, however, accepted that it was a common factor in decisions concerning promotions. Within the two professions the growth of the global market and developments in IT mean that many employees, including this study's interviewees, are expected to work long hours, for some, as often as every month. Increasing levels of competition for contracts, and demanding clients have resulted in higher levels of demand for staff to work longer hours. Managers and other senior staff recognised that long hours were becoming more common within their workplaces. However, many commented that in order to remain competitive, in an increasingly tight professional market, employees were required to meet tight deadlines and thus meet the expectations of their clients. When questioned further about the increasingly heavy work schedules experienced by many working in architecture, one partner commented that some of the responsibility lay with demanding clients. Changes to working arrangements within the profession, including the introduction of client 'project managers', resulted in additional layers of bureaucracy to work with. The traditional direct working relationship between architect and client has, in many cases, been replaced by an architect - intermediary - client working relationship. This added complexity brings with it further demands on architects' time. Thus the needs and demands of the client or their representative are driving changes to the working practices of the architecture profession.

*"We have some clients, especially as we work more and more with developers, we have one who'll call at 11 o'clock at night and expect you to be there, if they want you there, at 6 o'clock in the morning. You've got to be there and that could be in any part of the country what so ever. So, yes, people are becoming demanding and I'm not sure if it's because there aren't enough hours in the day and they have to fit meetings in somewhere, or because they think it's a macho thing to do. Clients do*

*have deadlines and we have to meet their expectations and that means going the extra mile to compete with other people in our field.”* Female architect, early fifties, full time hours, grown up children.

Thus the long hours' culture may be driven in part by the need to be economically competitive, by a need to compete with professional peers and by a pervading 'macho' culture. In architecture the latter aspect could be ascribed to the dominance of men in the construction and property developing industries, both of which are integral components of the architecture profession. Amongst the accountants surveyed, it was felt that the long hours' culture is also generated and exacerbated by a strong sense of competition between peers. Within large accounting organisations, whole cohorts of trainees are recruited at one time. These cohorts train and work together, and often develop strong social networks. The peer pressure to work longer hours than a colleague starts early in the career and can often continue as new entrants are promoted and progress together. One accountant commented on the culture, amongst trainees, of 'boasting' about the amount of overtime accrued, using it as a proxy measure for organisational commitment. The accountant commented that, post qualification, it was expected, and accepted, that employees' hours would increase again. In some of the prominent accountancy firms, decisions governing future possible partners and directors are made very early in a professional career. Competition between colleagues is thus not only for current and immediately senior positions, but also for future partner positions.

### **Client-driven long hours**

Not only do professionals have peer and colleague expectations to meet or exceed concerning long hours and notions of 'hard' work, the influence of clients and customers is also important. In an economy where both architects and accountants have to compete for work from, often, a small number of powerful clients, the role that the patron plays in shaping working practices is significant.

Coupled with increasingly demanding clients and a competitive external market, is an increasingly competitive internal market. All respondents from

both professions commented on a culture amongst some of their peers of increasingly long hours. The long hours are not necessarily driven by senior staff, nor by working demands, but by a 'macho culture' of competition, as defined by one respondent. This respondent, a female architect in her mid-forties with two small children, had worked in a number of large firms before setting up her own practice in order better to balance her work and family commitments. She felt that, in many practices, new members of staff were encouraged to work long hours, not out of demand but rather out of the need to 'be seen'. She argued that those working shorter hours were more productive with their time, spending less on informal or social activities and still producing the work required of them. She believed that one of the drivers for longer working hours was the professions' close working relationship with the construction industry, an industry characterised by a predominantly male workforce and long working hours. In her practice she discouraged overtime and saw it as the responsibility of management to do this, arguing that leading by example was the best way of encouraging changes in working practices.

*"We have an industry that is very masculine, very macho, late hours and all that. We don't have that in our office, it's a 40 hour week and any other time is time off in lieu."*

This architect had two part time staff working for her and felt that there should be tax incentives for employers to encourage flexible working. A member of the professional interest group 'Architects for Change'<sup>64</sup>, she believed that the

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<sup>64</sup> Started in January 2000, Architects for Change (AFC) acts as an umbrella committee for a number of interested groups, these being: Women in Architecture, Disability Forum, RIBA Student Group, Society of Black Architects and the Jane Drew Prize (a national prize awarded to non architects who have contributed significantly to the advancement of architecture). At its core, Architects for Change has 6 key aims:

- To encourage a more representative entry into architecture, particularly women, black and minority ethnic groups;
- To ensure recognition and appreciation of diversity in both architectural education and practice;
- To research student drop out rates and promote measures that will enable all students to achieve their potential and to successfully complete their architectural education and training, irrespective of race, gender, social and economic status or disability;
- To research and monitor those in architecture with disabilities and to ensure the correct allocation of disability funding to support them;
- To improve employment, promotion opportunities and working conditions for all in architectural practice, irrespective of race, gender, social and economic status or disability, by encouraging and promoting flexible working arrangements, childcare facilities and CPD, and

benefits of flexible working should be promoted to employers as part of a wider 'diversity' package, encouraging greater numbers of women and minority ethnic groups within the profession.

### **Recording working hours**

As discussed in chapter two, research in US law firms (Epstein et al 1999) showed how some company practices, involving the publication of individuals' 'billable hours' (the employee hours for which the company charges) encouraged or supported long working hours. In my research, both architects and accountants reported regular *under-recording* of their hours. This was ascribed to external market pressures, such as the need to maintain lower costs than competitors, and thus to under-record hours spent on clients' work to ensure their continued business. Other respondents commented that some, more junior, members of staff would under-record their hours spent on a specific activity if they felt that they had spent too long on the task or if they had had difficulty completing it. Under-recording thus arose from: the need to maintain lower costs; the need to maintain the current client base and attract further business; and the fear of highlighting 'perceived' professional weaknesses that necessitated employees spending longer than anticipated on projects. None of the respondents commented that this perception of professional weakness was a factor in *their own* under-recording of hours, but rather, was a concern about others within the practice. A senior architect in a large practice commented that managers were generally aware if long hours were a result of individuals struggling with the content of their work, rather than working long hours in order to increase their workplace visibility. When it appeared that individuals were struggling, help was offered in terms of additional training, or a temporary lightening of their workload. Where long hours were the result of client demand, then little could be done, bar bringing in self employed architects on a temporary basis. Long hours to meet clients' demands were viewed as 'the nature of the beast'.

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- To promote and support good practice in equal opportunities in architectural employment initiatives in the construction industry and other professions.



Under-recording of working hours was commented on by respondents from both professions. Such under-recording occurred in a number of ways. Often respondents simply under-recorded the amount of time spent on a particular client. In addition, or as an alternative approach, indirect time such as general planning, day to day project management or general administration would not be recorded on any time sheets. Thus a number of respondents would not record at least two hours of work a day or the equivalent of an additional 40 hours per month. Naturally such additional time would also go under-recorded in terms of additional remuneration either in salary or in time in lieu.

The majority of respondents commented that under-recording was not endorsed by management. Indeed it was often discouraged. However, at middle manager levels and within teams such an approach was the norm. One respondent, a trainee accountant, commented that colleagues who under-recorded would often boast of the additional hours that they had 'put in', seeing it as a form of company commitment. In one instance, a recent promotion was viewed poorly due to the lack of additional hours that the staff member had accrued.

*"I was quite shocked in my first week when you go on like a freshers course being introduced to people. We had these accountants at the time who were almost qualified giving this course, and I will never forget one of the things he said was 'oh, such and such person, he was, it's so unfair, he was promoted in front of person B and person B had like 500 hours of overtime built up.'"* Trainee female accountant, late twenties, working flexible hours, two pre-school age children.

An organisation could class itself as a family friendly employer by demonstrating, at a national level, a commitment to ensuring a work life balance for employees. At a local level, or within and between teams, however, practices could be entirely dependent upon individual managers. This point is also highlighted in recent research on line managers and family friendly employment (Yeandle et al 2003). The authors found that despite organisation wide policies, local discretion, governing take up of such working practices, was used in most cases. Within my research, an accounting human resources manager commented that peer pressure and differing leadership styles played a key part in the continued emphasis on long hours and a lack of flexibility about working practices.

*“There are partners within this business unit who praise their staff for working effectively and leaving on time, but then there are others who in their own practices they work long hours and therefore the people that work for them, copy them because you emulate your leader.”* Human resources manager, large multinational firm.

This manager went on to explain that whilst organisational structures may be in place to support non-standard working, collegial cultures have developed that encourage long hours as a form of workplace or professional commitment. She felt that, at an organisational and professional level, individuals needed to take responsibility for the length of their own working day. Only then could this act as a catalyst for cultural changes in working styles and attitudes. As a member of the human resources team, her role involved offering guidance to staff members looking for ways to manage working hours. In many cases this simply involved providing guidance on more effective time management practices. In other instances, despite senior management's advocacy of work life balance, individual members of staff appeared not to be able to break the 'long hours habit'. Commenting on a member of staff who was repeatedly working over 12 hour days, the respondent remarked that, irrespective of the forms of workplace support that could be offered, staff members also had to take responsibility for changes in their working practices.

*“I guess the element that we don't see is that there's something about firms and the senior people within firms talking about work life balance and saying, it's here if you want it, and the other side. People taking responsibility for their own work life practices. Because at the end of the day there isn't anyone standing over them saying, 'Where the hell do you think you're going?' it's not that kind of culture. But when you ask people why they don't take responsibility, it's because they don't want to be thought of badly.”* Human resources manager, large multinational firm.

### **The influence of peer approval**

Professionals' concern to attain, and maintain, peer and management approval is perhaps at the crux of the issue concerning non-standard working and the continued preferential treatment given to those working full time hours. As professions have developed over time, their identity has become implicitly and explicitly gendered masculine. Both accountancy and architecture were, at first, exclusively male domains which did not admit women. Exclusionary strategies which were practised well into the early twentieth century actively

prevented women from entering the professions of architecture and accountancy. Within accountancy, women were not prevented from working as public accountants, but could not be members of the professional bodies. It was not until the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 was introduced that women were able to join the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) and thus practice as fully as their male peers. As outlined in chapter three, one of the ways in which professionals are differentiated from those in other occupations is by their 'respectable and gentlemanly behaviour' (Macdonald, 1995). In this discourse, professions were developed as public and 'serious' constructs, thereby 'unsuitable' for women. Indeed, Kirkham and Loft (1993) states that the professional accountant came to be something that was 'not a woman' (Kirkham and Loft, *ibid*:507). The 'macho culture' adopted by many professionals involves long hours and high visibility within the organisation, and is often used to demonstrate commitment to the firm and to the profession. By implication, then, non-standard workers are viewed as less committed, both to the organisation and to their careers. Epstein et al (1999) argues that part time work in particular carries a form of 'symbolic baggage' in terms of career ambition, professional commitment and family life. She found that the stigma associated with part time working in the US legal profession was affected by a number of factors, including; the sector in which the professional was working; whether part time hours were temporary (to suit sudden changes to home commitments or health etc); whether the part time status had been negotiated from a full time position; and whether the professional was a contract lawyer from an agency. A permanent change of contract from full time to part time status was taken as a clear indication of a lack of commitment to the organisation and to their career. Male lawyers in the firms surveyed by Epstein were not expected to take part time positions for home or child care. If shorter hours were needed to fit with outside commitments such as political or academic duties, the change to working hours was labelled as temporary, and such outside commitments were viewed as bringing value and status to the firm.

As outlined in the opening chapter, the number of individuals employed on a part time basis is increasing. Part time working is prominent in the service sector and in the wider economy. However, the expectation that men will

continue to work full time hours and that part time working is a feminised form of employment is common across all professions and work organisations. The traditional male breadwinner model and the culturally acceptable role of part time employment for women may drive such an expectation. Rubery et al (1998) argues that part time working remains a “universally gendered form of employment” (1998:1). As outlined in chapter one, part time working is still, predominantly, a working practice adopted by women, often in order to balance work and care commitments.

### **A full time – part time dichotomy?**

Warren and Walters (1998) argue that there is a tendency in the literature on women’s employment to oversimplify any divisions into broad groupings, and in particular into dichotomies. The authors explored the role of dichotomies in the context of full time and part time workers. It could be argued that the differences in conditions and in the types of worker and workforce characteristics, associated with full time and part time work, are suggestive of a dichotomy between full time and part time work. Warren and Walters contend that, whilst this dichotomy is useful when examining the different labour market positions of workers, a wider appreciation of the differences and similarities of the two groups of workers would enable a greater understanding of women’s labour market experiences over the life-course.

Findings from my research and from reviews of related literature point to there being a false logic in presenting those working part time and full time as dichotomous. The over simplified, binary definition of full time and part time employment does not reflect the multi faceted nature of women’s (and in some cases men’s) interactions with the labour market. Women have rarely had a simple, uniform, relationship with the labour market. Irrespective of their position in the labour market, be it in an unskilled, semi skilled or highly skilled position, women are likely to have some of their working practices determined by domestic commitments and demands. My research found (as examined in detail later in this chapter), career histories that had mostly been characterised by full time training periods, followed by full time qualification/trainee positions, with family formation and child-rearing leading to shorter working hours or career breaks. The approach of some authors, which treats full time and part

time workers as distinct groups, underestimates the extent to which, during a career, workers (predominantly women) may practice different forms of working. It also reinforces the conception of part time employment as 'other', compared with a full time norm, thus maintaining the division between the full time 'standard' forms of employment and the 'non-standard' other.

The conception of part time workers as a group distinct from their full time peers is reinforced by a typification of part time female workers as prioritising home life over their careers (Hakim 1996). Hakim argues that part time workers have 'traditional' attitudes towards home and work compared with full time female workers who are more 'male' in their approach. Her analysis views part time female workers as less likely to demonstrate a strong work ethic and more similar in outlook and aspirations to housewives than other workers. They are seen as having little firm attachment to a career plan, a point also made by Paera, who represents this as a common employer attitude.

*"The meanings attached to gender play a significant role in shaping how women are viewed by their employers. For many employers, women are regarded as mothers- whether they are actually mothers or not – and mothers, they assume, will put family before career. For such employers, 'not committed' becomes a shorthand expression for their gendered assumptions about the relationship between women, work and family. It is the woman lawyer interviewed for the job whose commitment is questioned, not the man's."* (Paera, no date)

In my research, all but one of the respondents working part time, or planning to move to part time hours, were planning to remain in their professions. The one respondent who considered leaving her profession (accountancy) was working part time and planning on taking an extended break to spend time with her children. She felt that, within her current organisation, a large public sector employer, there was little prospect of promotion for part time employees.

*"I am taking six months parental leave next October to see more of the children and review my career. Promotion does not appear to be available to someone in my position. I'm not able to work the long hours expected or required to keep pace with the workload and the childcare flexibility that I require is not available."* Female accountant, early forties, three children aged between three and eight. Working part time.

Even where respondents were disillusioned with their current position and experiencing a temporary set-back to their career development, they were not planning to move into different areas of work. Rather the options they were considering centred on possible moves into the more peripheral, non-practice areas of their profession, such as lecturing, journalism, or consultancy. Thus the theory that part time workers are less committed to their profession than their full time peers was thus not supported in my research. Indeed, a key finding from this research, which emerged from the majority of the interviews, was that career patterns and work were characterised by a multitude of interactions with the labour market, both on a full and part time basis. Life stage is an important factor in determining the likelihood to work part time and the propensity to return, at a later date, to full time hours, and my conceptualisation of part time and full time working practices is not static, but rather depends upon key life stages. During a working career, people may move through a number of different work and life stages.

### **Professionals working on a part time basis**

Professionals working part time often work shorter hours than other part time workers. Osbourne's (1996) analysis of the 1995 New Earnings Survey shows that part time professional workers were predominantly working under 16 hours per week, and that they had the highest hourly wage levels of all part time workers. However, whilst there are clear opportunities for a few part time workers to earn high salaries, there has been a greater proliferation of part time jobs at the lower end, with low levels of pay and low union membership. In general, it is argued part time workers are vertically segregated with lower skilled work predominating along with lower levels of in-work training. In my study, however, part time workers were highly trained, but more limited in their career progression and promotion prospects than their full time colleagues. They were also less likely to be undertaking training, reporting that it was difficult to fit into a shorter working week.

Hakim's (1997, 2002) argument, that part time workers are more similar, in labour market motivations and attitudes towards work and life, to non-employed workers (predominantly women) than to fellow colleagues is not borne out in my research. Whilst my study was not conceptualised to test and

critique Hakim's ideas, her theories of lifestyle choice and labour market determinants have been prominent in contemporary labour market debates. Specifically, Hakim's theory of gendered labour market segmentation is pertinent to my concern with the impact of non-standard working practices on career development within the professions. One of my key findings is that non-standard forms of working do not reflect a lack of commitment but rather provide a rational solution to the difficulties of balancing demanding work and home activities. All the respondents who were working part time hours or planning a move to non-standard hours commented that the prevailing ideas about long hours were taken as a sign of commitment to an organisation. Such was the prevalence of long hours working in their organisations that they were resigned to the perceived negative impact that their current or future working patterns would have on their career development. Reasons given for non-standard working did not only include caring or domestic commitments. One respondent commented on a colleague, training for the priesthood, who worked non-standard hours in order to undertake this training.

*"We have other people here who've got other things, one of our directors is quite committed to being a priest which fits in quite well to being in an architecture practice, it's not that he's only half committed, he's actually 100 per cent committed. You can't expect him to do something on a Friday because Friday is a day when he's not here. He will come in on a weekend if he has to and he does demonstrate an appropriate level of commitment."* Female director of architecture practice, mid fifties, grown up children.

Although this respondent is using the example of the architect/priest as a positive model of non-standard working, this quotation also demonstrates an interesting paradox. The architect/priest is viewed as committed to his profession by demonstrating 'appropriate' levels of commitment through working at weekends when necessary. It is thus implied that his ability to work non-standard hours has been 'earned' through his willingness to work weekends, something that those with caring responsibilities might not be able to do. It is these notions of commitment, either to work or to home, that appear to impact on the assimilation of non-standard working practices into the mainstream of working patterns. Perpetuating non-standard working as 'other', or less committed, reinforces the more negative experiences of career progression of those working part time, compared with their full time

colleagues. As discussed in chapter two, Hakim argues that those women who have a stronger attachment to their home commitments than to their work commitments prefer part time work. In addition, she argues that part time workers are more likely to be employed in less demanding jobs. Such jobs are likely to have a lower level of autonomy, be more repetitive and require a lower level of intellectual or technical input. Developed further, this argument implies that only full time workers can demonstrate both intellectual and emotional 'buy-in' to their work, and that technical or demanding jobs can only be undertaken by a full time worker demonstrating a 'suitable' level of commitment.

Hakim's approach, whilst providing a useful perspective from which to examine women's relationships with workplace and home commitments, can be criticised for its tendency to categorise all part time workers together in terms of their characteristics, attitudes and orientations to work. From my research it is clear that both professionals' experiences of part time working, and the strategies that employers adopt concerning non-standard workers, vary greatly. Some employers, keen to retain valuable staff, or to recruit staff with specific skills, offer part time or other forms of non-standard contract in an attempt to maintain their skills base. Two respondents who have worked part time for most of their careers, and who specialise in very specific areas of their field reported being offered very flexible working contracts by their current employers in order to bring their skills to the firms. Both respondents had been working on part time contracts at their previous employers before being approached. Part time hours were, in these instances, used as a way to recruit appropriately skilled professionals.

***“Question: so did you have to change your working practices when you moved to Firm X? No, they were aware that I worked part time and that I had a young family. They were keen to recruit me for a specific project that they had in mind and so offered me a good position on my existing part time hours. I was aware that xx were very supportive to their employees working part time and so I was keen to go there. It was my specialism that they were interested in, that was the most important thing.”*** Female, architect, mid forties, working part time, two children under eleven.



## Life course strategies

As discussed in chapter two, to adequately balance home and work commitments women, (and some men), adopt certain strategies. Yeandle (1984) identified a number these from her sample of non-professional mothers: commercial or ad hoc, often in the form of using childcare services; part time working and homeworking; long hours of work; and the use of domestic labour saving devices. Later analyses have identified other strategies. In their examination of women working in medicine and finance, Crompton and Harris (1998) found that there were distinct differences between the approaches adopted by the two groups of professionals in terms of meeting home and work commitments. This was also evident in my research. In general the accountants interviewed were slightly more likely to use full time childcare services including nannies, au pairs and private schools and thus meet their home and work commitments through *satisficing*<sup>21</sup> in terms of their domestic commitments. The differences between my respondents' strategies and those of Yeandle's research reflect perhaps the differences in their location within the labour market hierarchy. My respondents, all located in relatively well paid professions, similar to those in Crompton and Harris' research, were able to pay for domestic help, private schools or full time childcare.

***"Are your children at school or nursery? School now, my eldest has just started the reception year at school and my daughter is at nursery. But we've had to put them in a private school, purely because of childcare. At normal schools you have to be there at 9 o'clock and you have to be there at 3.15 and they have 12 weeks off a year and so how do you fit that around your working life? You can't."*** Female accountant, early thirties, two children, one school and one pre school age, works flexi hours.

Architects, on the other hand, were more likely to adopt different ways of working including shorter working days or weeks, or working from home in order to marry their home and work commitments. They were thus more likely to *satisfice* in terms of their work commitments. The following quotation from a female architect, now in her early fifties, highlights the factors that had been considered when deciding upon childcare for her family. She highlighted the key factors for her taking an extended career break as; a lack of local

childcare provision and a realisation that, at that time (mid 1970s) her husband could earn more working as an architect than she could. She acknowledged that her decision to take a career break was partly shaped by prevailing gendered notions of 'suitable' male and female roles but also argued that her decision was also shaped by 'rational' factors such as her husband's greater opportunities for earning a higher salary.

*"I suppose, um, because there were two of us in the family doing architecture, if we were going to have children, one of us was going to have to stay at home, that I felt was important. And of the two of us, I felt it better that I stayed at home, I felt that my husband's opportunities were better than mine so, it was a definite decision to take the break. Um, I was well aware that there would be repercussions in terms of career development because of that, and there definitely are."* Female architect, early fifties, two adult children, works part time.

Perspectives from life-course analysis and organisational sociology suggest that age and tenure provide markers of workers' locations in the temporal structures, or timetables, that underlie individual and organisational careers (Zerubavel, 1981). Organisational and life patterns are not necessarily in synchrony, the ideal family formation period may also coincide with the period needed to invest significant time at work.

*"In short, the working life course is embedded in a larger social context that structures transitions in and out of the labor [sic] force, and age is an approximate indicator of where workers are located relative to these normative points of entry and exit."* (Krecker 1994: 255)

Building on the discussion of life course strategies in chapter two it is evident that men and women are located in organisational structures at different points in their working lives. Family transitions have a great impact on women's working lives, and women's working lives are far more heavily influenced by non-work factors than men's. As evidenced in the preceding quotation from the female architect, childcare and child-rearing are two of the common determinants of women's interactions with the labour market. This is highlighted in other research. Walsh (2001) found that the most common motivation for working part time amongst respondents to her research was to spend more time with dependent children. The age of dependent children is centrally important to motivations to work full time or part time. Within my research, choices concerning working patterns were closely tied into children's

ages. Amongst the accountants surveyed, the majority of those working part time were looking to change their hours at some point in the future, returning to full or near full time employment. All cited their children reaching key stages (infant school, secondary school) as reasons for wanting to increase their hours.

**Question:** *“You’ve said that you’re doing 21.5 hours, three full days. Are you planning on making any changes to that in the foreseeable future?”* **Response:** *I think it would change when my son starts school and I might wish to do 5 days but shorter days within those 5, to allow for picking up from school.”* Female accountant, works part time, one child aged under 5.

Hakim’s research supposes that orientations to full time and part time working are static. No account is made of the impact of life stages on working time choices. Key life stages, such as recent qualification, family formation and the approach of retirement all play a part in determining a person’s relationship with the labour market. The ways in which such life stages impact on career development are also determined by external factors such as organisational norms and policies, provision of suitable and affordable care for children and labour market conditions.

Two female professionals surveyed as part of my research have had very different experiences of combining work and family life, due in part to changing norms and practices both of their employing organisations and of society in general, and are cited here as examples to show the different forms of strategies adopted by those seeking to balance home and work commitments.

#### **Example 1 – female accountant, early thirties, two children aged 5 and under (pseudonym used)**

Ann has followed what can be described as a ‘non-standard’ approach to higher education, training and qualification. Unlike the majority of accountants, she changed from full to part time study for two of the four years of her degree studies after the birth of her two children during her second and fourth years. Her initial plan had been to undertake a full time degree, but she changed her plans once she found she was expecting her first child. She returned to full time study in the 18 months between children but completed her studies on a

part time basis. Ann commented on the very supportive environment of the university which had encouraged her to continue her studies.

Having graduated, she moved into one of the most prestigious accounting firms to train on a full time basis, but after a few months found that she could not combine home and full time commitments and applied for shorter hours. She was successful in her application and is one of the very few trainee accountants to be qualifying and working on a part time basis. Applications for moves to flexible hours are considered on a case by case basis. Applications are made to the local office rather than the regional or national human resource teams and are considered at a local level. Ann stated that her senior managers were very keen on encouraging a 'healthy' work life balance and tried to lead by example, generally leaving at 5.30pm and encouraging their staff to do the same. She feels that, had she been working in another office of the same firm she would not have been offered flexible working.

*"In fact I'd be very surprised if I'd have got a flexible arrangement elsewhere. We're one of the smallest offices in the country, and I would be extremely surprised because for example, in this office the partners know my name and the directors know my name. If I was working in London, I'd be a number and a faceless person to the senior people who are the ones with the power to give flexi time. Your managers might know you and your peers might know you but I would doubt very very much. I think I'm the only student ever to be granted flexi time in this industry and I'm very happy for it, you know, it's great."*

Ann will reach qualification at the same time as her full time peers. Whilst she works fewer hours each week than her full time colleagues, she 'flexes' the hours during the weeks that she has to spend training or gaining particular experience. In this way, if she chooses to work 37 hours one week whilst training, she will then work five hours less the following week. Her childcare commitments are provided for by private nursery and junior schooling and by her own and her husband's abilities to work flexibly.

*"And it's not only what your employer will provide you with, or how much flexibility they will give you, but also the support you get at home. I have friends that are professionally qualified or with skills, that now can't go to work because their husbands won't support them at all. They will support them financially, but they think that 'oh well, my job is so and so or I travel round the place, so don't count on me to pick up the kids from school one day a week'. I couldn't do what I do if xxx wasn't flexible as well, so I think it's a combination of things that you need to have the same chances*

*as a man, it's not just your employer, it's other things as well. So I think that it's the biggest impact on your career, the family situation."*

She intends to continue working part time when both her children reach school age. Her relationship with the labour market will be governed most strongly by her home commitments.

*"Do you have any plans, when the children get sort of to senior school level, to go back full time? No, no my ideal plan, normally I work 32 hours a week which is just over 4 days, when I qualify I would like to bring that down to up to 4 days a week. I don't want 4 days a week Monday to Thursday, I want it on a flexible basis because I think it works much better. You don't have to work every day, it's just how you manage your diary"*

#### **Example 2 female architect, mid-50s, two grown up children.**

Barbara studied and qualified on a full time basis. She then had a number of full time positions but found that the precarious nature of the economy in the 1970s resulted in her experiencing several periods of unemployment. She worked on a number of temporary contracts before the births of her children. After her children were born she had a twelve-year career break before returning for two years on a part time basis before being made redundant again. She had not intended to have such a long career break but found that, despite having plans to remain in contact with her professional colleagues and undertake small contracts at home, she became largely divorced from the profession.

*"You think when you first take this break, that you will manage to keep in touch. You don't have an office position to go to, so you don't. Other things just take over. Apart from day to day conversations with people or perhaps the odd magazine, you don't keep in touch and you lose skills and you lose confidence. And that's a big drawback and actually going back into work, it's a confidence factor, especially if you go back after a long break, say 15 years, a big break. And you're a lot older and new people joining another office, you're expected to have a lot of skills at the age that you are."*

Through analysing the data from Barbara's interview, her commitment to her profession was clear. Despite a 12 year career break, her intention was to

return to her professional area on a part time basis, rather than take up another form of part time employment.

*"I then went back to work, or at least starting looking to go back to work, in architecture as opposed to in other little things looking for part time."*

Similar to Ann in the preceding example, Barbara felt that her movement to part time hours on return to the labour market was facilitated by approaching employers who were supportive of such working arrangements. In addition, she had specific skills in an area of design that they were interested in. She worked on a temporary basis for six months before being offered a permanent part time position with her current employer for whom she has now worked for 11 years. Barbara feels that there are now more opportunities for mothers to combine home and work responsibilities. Childcare facilities in the 1970s were very limited and neither she nor her husband had family in the locality to offer informal support.

*"When children are very small, I think there's, now anyway, there's facilities available, but there wasn't really an awful lot. What do you do with children and then teenage children? Young teenage children? I didn't see any opportunities. Neither of us have got family up here so there was not sort of, um, opportunities in that line, of grandparents to call on."*

Barbara feels that part time working within the profession does limit her ability to take on more senior work. Job running (securing new work) is generally left to the full time architects. She does feel however that by not moving into more senior positions she has been able to continue working in areas of the profession that interest her, such as design and project start up work rather than the more managerial duties that are the remit of more senior positions. She intends to continue working part time, enjoying the additional free time that she has. Her relationship with the labour market continues to be shaped by her home commitments.

*"I like the hours that I work, I like having the time to do other things and catch up on the house. I don't particularly want to go back to doing all day every day. There's not really been any pressure from practice, just from my partner. He thinks it might be a good idea."*

## **The role of gender in determining attitudes towards working practices**

Occupational and cultural structures limit the extent to which employment and family roles can be combined. Family, mother and child ideologies are all crucial in determining women's roles in the labour market. The varying stages of family formation can impact on labour market participation. Traditionally, low levels of female engagement in the labour market resulted in few support services for working females such as childcare (as demonstrated in Barbara's example above) or domestic support. Therefore, in order to develop more support services, demand needed to increase.

**Figure 6.1 The vicious circle of labour market participation and childcare provision**



It follows therefore, and is evidenced in my research, that younger professionals, both males and females, may be more open to non-standard working and combining home and family not only because society and organisations have become more accepting but because there are more services available to support such forms of work. The continued growth in domestic and childcare services is evidenced across Europe (Yeandle et al 1999).

Running counter to this, however, is a belief emerging from my research that as long as non-standard working remains a 'minority issue' within the professions, it will remain the exception rather than the norm. One female architect commented that as long as domestic commitments (especially childcare) were perceived as predominantly female responsibilities, non-standard and flexible forms of working would remain a minority issue.

*"The difficulties of working tend to be more for females than males I think, although I'm sure that there are males who are trying to juggle family and work, perhaps without partners. I don't know whether they could or not. I suppose in a way they should, I'm sure it's seen as a minority issue. There are other things that they [practitioners] are working on and that sort of thing [flexible working] will be quite a way down the list for the majority of practitioners. I think finally that if changes like that affect the men, then it's going to be taken more seriously, no doubt. But that's from a personal view without perhaps experience to back it up. A natural prejudice, changes don't generally get mainstreamed until it affects both sexes. And I think there's still very much a male view about 'I need to be there before the boss and after the boss has gone' in a lot of places, not here." Female architect, mid thirties, part time, one child under 5*

Again, the view of non-standard working as 'other' is strongly perceived by those within the professions. The impact of workplace (micro) and national (macro) cultural norms is key to the development of non-standard working practices. The life stage impact, as documented earlier, forms a temporary trade-off, which is often made when the children are young as evidenced in my research. Mennino (2002) contends that women may choose professions that have a career pattern that fits in with child rearing. Amongst the accountants and architects interviewed, there appeared to be little forward planning in terms of professional specialism. The decision to move into a specific area of practice was determined by interest rather than by considerations of the specialism's demands in terms of hours of work and extra-curricular commitments. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, however, many of those interviewed had either experienced changes to their specialist areas as a result of their changed working patterns or were anticipating such changes.

The decisions made by professionals regarding work life balance are determined as much by notions of gender roles as by economic decisions. My research found that both respondents to the face to face interviews and those employers and other professionals who took part in the gatekeeper interviews anticipated that women would take time out of work to undertake caring duties. One male architect, moving to part time hours, found that his employer had only agreed to the part time hours on a temporary basis. The respondent put this down to the practice's very 'traditional' structure.

*"There are a few people that think working part time is a problem for me, because they have a rather old fashioned view. [boss] for example has a really old fashioned idea about it, because he thinks you should be in 5*



*days a week and if you're not, he doesn't agree with flexible working really at all. He just can't understand my reasons for it."* Male architect, mid thirties, moving to part time hours, two children under 3

Mennino's research contends that, due to societal and cultural norms and values, concerning women as the primary care giver and men as primary breadwinners, women are more likely to make employment sacrifices whilst men are more likely to make family sacrifices. As evidenced in my research, it may be the case that employers are more willing to accept non-standard working for their female than their male employees. Indeed, the construction of an organisation can, in turn, impact on the gendered construction of work and family roles. Therefore those in traditionally male type occupations are more likely to sacrifice the family tasks for work responsibilities.

One female accountant, to be referred to as Catherine, outlined how her home life was very dependent upon her paid domestic support and how her employment had, at times, to take precedence. After the birth of her first child, due to large work commitments she had to take a very short period of maternity leave (6 weeks) in order to meet her work commitments and not prejudice her attempt to become partner. Within her practice, and indeed across the accountancy profession, the perceived wisdom was that those preparing for partner/director level responsibilities worked long hours in order to demonstrate their 'commitment' to the firm and the profession. Catherine subsequently became partner and finds that her current level of seniority allows her to have a more flexible working pattern. Compared with other respondents' experiences of flexible working, her flexibility is very limiting, and only extends to delaying her arrival in the office by 10 minutes (9.10am instead of 9am) and leaving the office at 5pm rather than the more usual 6pm.

As evidenced by Catherine's example above, many male type occupations have characteristics that are less accommodating to work and family balance, and 'tradeoffs' are not equal (Mennino 2002). A priority of work over family is expected, especially at a more senior level. More highly skilled and paid workers are more likely to have flexible working available but as higher paid employees, are expected to work longer and harder. Conversely, Mennino contends that workers with higher human capital are more likely to make employment trade offs rather than family trade offs. Their employers are also

more likely to offer them flexibility in an attempt to maintain their skills base. Again however, such human capital will have taken time and effort to develop and will thus have required considerable investments of time over the early years of labour market engagement.

This chapter has illustrated how notions of time deviance and a lack of professional commitment influence some organisations' and individuals' perceptions of non-standard working practices. It has also highlighted that, as evidenced in research into other employment fields, decisions governing flexible working practices within the professions are often made at local level. This is despite many large organisations having nationally determined family friendly policies. The chapter has discussed the impact that technological changes, including those affecting computer systems, have enabled greater numbers of professionals, and others, to work outside 'standard' working hours. For some respondents to my study, this has provided an opportunity to develop a business case for non-standard working. The chapter has also discussed the ways in which respondents have attempted to reconcile their home and work commitments. The following chapter considers how work and life strategies are developed and how they impact on career development, access to training and commitment to the profession.

### Strategies adopted for non standard working

The preceding chapter discussed considerations of 'time normative' behaviour, greedy institutions and workplace visibility. This chapter will outline in more detail the organisational and individual responses to non-standard working found in my study. In addition, the chapter will explore cultural and organisational expectations about professional norms and identities, and how these impact on those working non-standard hours.

### Non-standard working: impacts on career progression

As discussed in Chapter two, Jacobs and Epstein et al, op. cit. amongst others, argue that non-standard working has a negative impact on career progression. Although professional and technical workers are more likely to be autonomous and to have higher human capital, they are also more likely to work longer hours. As outlined in Chapter five, compared with the national average<sup>65</sup>, architects and accountants surveyed for this research worked, on average, two hours extra each week. Since professional work is highly skilled and requires specific expertise and a long period of training and qualification, there are fewer individuals able to do each job. As a result, professionals surveyed in this research reported that working any pattern other than the 'traditional' 40 hour week was likely to impact on their careers. Negative impacts included the type of work offered to an individual and limitations on the possibilities for development and promotion within their current position. These factors and others, are considered in detail later in this chapter.

As highlighted in the preceding chapter in the example of Ann, opportunities to take up flexible working are more likely to be available, and taken up, when management endorses and supports such practices. Other research has also highlighted that where non-standard working arrangements are used and endorsed as a formal management system, take up is higher (Jacobs 1997 and Brandth 2001).

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<sup>65</sup> 40 hours for men and 38 hours for women. Source, Labour Force Survey, Spring Quarter 2003

This shows that, where take up is dependent upon individual request rather than collective promotion, those who take up the policies are seen as time deviant and less committed both to their profession and to their organisation. Despite some management support for non-standard working, respondents felt that taking up such working practices would have a damaging impact on career progression and promotion. Indeed, there was a sense that this was unavoidable. Some commented on the need to return to full time hours in order to gain promotion. For the majority of respondents, therefore, the differential treatment of non-standard workers in terms of career progression was something that was expected and indeed almost planned for, in terms of future planning about children or promotion, "I'll gain this promotion and then think about children", or "Once X is at school I'll go back full time and then get my promotion." There was almost no sense, arising from the interviews, that this treatment could be challenged, although respondents certainly believed that it should be challenged, and that the business benefits of non-standard working should be emphasised. These perceived business benefits included a reduction in 'downtime', when full time staff are paid for slack periods, and the greater personal commitment and motivation which staff display when able to combine their non-work commitments with their profession.

### **Respondents' opinions of the impact non-standard working will have on their career progression**

*"There is still the perception that part time equals a lack of commitment. Or, if not a lack of commitment, because there are a number of very good and capable women who are working part time, it's a case of a reluctance to work flexibly around them."* Female accountant, mid thirties, planning on children, working as a consultant

*"I think certainly if you changed your working hours to have non working days, that would be a problem because certainly at senior manager level you are expected to be here, and I think that that would have an impact on promotion prospects."* Female accountant, early thirties, working full time, no children

*"It does take longer to get higher. You have to prove yourself more to meet expectations that you're not able to take on responsibilities. If you only work two and a half days, you're much more restricted in what you can do. If you have proved yourself, then you're treated slightly better and they're loathe to promote somebody who works 4 days. Female architect, mid forties, two teenage children, working full time.*

Note: responses to question: "How do you think non-standard working will impact on your career/how did non standard working impact on your career?"

Senior staff in both professions stated that the demand for trainee positions in their firms was such that there were few business benefits for them in offering non-standard working options. One senior accountant stated that his firm did not need to offer flexible working practices to get highly qualified members of staff. New entrants were more interested in salary levels, company perks and development opportunities than in working arrangements and flexible working hours.

Those respondents who were working part time, or considering moves into non-standard hours, were aware of the possible impacts on their career progression. A male architect in his mid thirties, and considering working part time to meet childcare needs, believed that such a move would impact negatively on future career progression. In a way his case is the mirror image of Barbara's example outlined in the preceding chapter. Barbara described how when her children were born, she decided to give up work to care for them as her husband had greater earnings potential. She was aware that her career would be affected, but felt there were few alternative solutions. In this example, Alan has found that it is more economic to reduce his working hours and thereby reduce the number of days his children need to spend in formal childcare. His wife has a larger salary, and their household decision has been for him to work three days per week and his wife, four. He is aware of the impact that this change in working hours will have on his career, but feels that there is no alternative.

***"How will this change in hours impact on your career progression?  
Oh it's a disaster, it's an absolute disaster, it's a complete nose dive.  
Maybe that's just the way of the world, I don't know. My career is, it can't  
generate the income that my wife's does, and at the moment, to keep our***

*heads above water, it's actually about how much we earn. So, it's better for us to focus things around her and then see, well what can I do?"*

The choices that Alan has had to make, and those that Barbara before him made, are heavily constrained by considerations of economy and of the best forms of care for their families. Unlike Crompton and Harris' (1998) examples, cited in Chapter two, of professionals selecting areas of specialism in advance of family formation, that will be more flexible to the joint commitments of home and work, Alan and Barbara have had to react to the changing demands of work and home. Alan explained that the practice where he was employed was heavily male dominated, like most architectural practices. It was common for the female administrative and support staff to work part time or non-standard hours, but was much less common for the male, professional staff to do so. He saw his employers as fairly supportive, with a number of colleagues able to pursue non-work activities due to flexible working patterns. However, he felt that his employers were unable to understand why he needed to cut his working hours to meet home and caring responsibilities. The practice continued to have heavily gendered views of work and non-work roles, with the dominant norm being that of a male professional supported by a non or part time working, home centred, female.

### **Non-standard working and access to training**

There were a number of ways in which Alan felt that part time working would limit his career progression, one of which was access to training. The practice runs weekly lunch time seminars where manufacturers or technicians demonstrate new materials or software and so on. The seminars are promoted by senior staff as a key way to improve technical knowledge. They are also one of the main avenues through which to undertake continued professional development (CPD) within the practice. The seminars will take place on a non-work day for Alan.

Updating skill levels and furthering technical knowledge are seen as factors key to career development by many of the respondents. Literature on professional development, discussed in detail in Chapter three, highlights the centrality of a specific body of knowledge to the continued status of the

professions, (Torstendahl and Burrage 1990). Within professions that are dependent upon technical skill as well as a strong theoretical knowledge base, the ability to enhance and develop technique is vital to career development. As Abbott argues:

*"Knowledge replacement becomes a serious career problem when a total turnover of effective knowledge takes less time than the thirty years that span a typical career. Professions respond to such knowledge change with two career strategies: continuing education and career turnover."* (Abbott 1988: 180)

Faced with continual technical innovations, professionals can either update their skills or consider movements out of that particular specialism, or out of the profession completely. The opportunities to undertake training amongst staff working non-standard hours are fewer than for their full time colleagues. Within accountancy as well, updating skills and attending training events are seen as crucial to career progression. One partner commented that a part time member of staff had been advised to increase her hours to enable her to attend training events held on her former non-work days. It was perceived by the practice that a lack of training was limiting the accountant's career progression.

*"There is a lady in the office who had been doing three days a week. Now some of the courses are run on days when she doesn't work and she hasn't wanted to go on the courses or found it difficult to. So it is obviously holding her progression. As a result, she's now decided to do four days a week. That was entirely her choice, we didn't force her into it. I think she's realised that she's been left a little bit behind."* Female director of accounting practice, mid forties, three children, works full time.

When this example was examined further, the partner stated that the part time hours did not impact on her employee's career progression, and that it was her inability to attend all relevant training programmes that was impeding her progression. What these examples demonstrate is that career development is not purely reliant upon visibility within the office or hours worked, but also on more formalised processes. The need to undertake training and maintain a specific body of knowledge is important to career development and also to the maintenance of the professions. Within the two professions studied, training and continued professional development continue to play key parts in the formation of the professional groups.

It is not clear from the data whether a lack of training may have been used as a proxy for not promoting a non-standard working professional. Many of the respondents who were working non-standard hours commented that they were unable to fit training into their shorter working weeks. They also identified training and CPD as key components of career progression. Analysis of the questionnaire survey by working patterns and training, reveals that there are distinct differences between the two professions in terms of the likelihood that part time workers will undertake training.

**Table 7.1 Accountants and architects undertaking training by work status**

|                          | Accountants (%) |           | Architects (%) |           |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
|                          | Full time       | Part time | Full time      | Part time |
| Undertaking training     | 37              | 0         | 47             | 50        |
| Not Undertaking training | 63              | 100       | 53             | 50        |

A third of accountants working full time were undertaking training, however, none working part time were doing so. This contrasts strongly with architecture, where almost equal numbers of full and part time employees were undertaking training at the time of the survey. By the time of the face to face interviews, one of the trainee accountants employed on a full time basis at the time of the survey, had changed to shorter hours and was still undertaking the standard Chartered Institute training programme. Another accountant who had worked on a part time contract at a university until a year prior to the survey, had been denied training there, and thus the ability to develop her skills further.

*"I had no training at all in the four years that I was there, no opportunity, the director of finance wanted to keep it all for himself basically."* Female accountant, working part time, one child under 5 years.

This accountant subsequently moved to another public sector organisation and found that she was offered a large amount of training, both specific to her profession and more general, organisation training. This was offered irrespective of working hours, although her workload limited the amount that she could undertake.

*"I think that my line manager might forget or not fully appreciate the loss of two days at the start and end of the week and that's a case of*



*managing expectations. Well, I mean, I'm sat in what is formerly been defined as a permanent, full time post, but I'm doing it part time, so in some respects I'm still trying to cover off [sic] a lot of work in two days less."* Female accountant, working part time, one child under 5 years.

## **Non-standard working and managing expectations**

### *Colleagues' expectations*

The quotation above illustrates how one respondent, a female accountant, working part time hours in order to meet childcare needs, has to manage the expectations of her full time colleagues. The implication here is that, having taken over a formerly full time post, the workload has remained that of a full time position which has to be concentrated into a shorter working week. The respondent also commented that many full time posts could be undertaken within part time hours. Throughout the research, there was a general agreement, both by accountants and architects, that many full time positions could be adapted to suit shorter working hours. Time management was a key skill that was perceived as vital to those working non-standard hours.

*"You work better if you're more organised and I think one of women's abilities, particularly if they've got families, is that they do, they're working hard, and they do organise their time very well. Lots of lads will spread it out because they're working till 8 every night. In the end, they're doing the same job, they go round about at it differently."* Female architect, mid forties, works full time, self employed, two junior school age children.

### *Clients' expectations*

As well as the fact that, traditionally, men working full time hours had dominated the two professions of architecture and accountancy, other expectations of working hours were discussed in the interviews. Many of these expectations emanated from the clients', or more specifically, from partners and senior staff's views of clients' reactions to non-standard working.

*"I think it's a little bit difficult for the profession to give flexi time, because there's audit teams going out to clients' premises and I think it's a bit difficult to be going at different times or on different days. I don't think clients would receive that very well, so that would cause difficulties. I think for the people working in the office, they can flex their time and there's other people to cover for them. I think when you're going out and representing the firm at clients' premises it's a bit more difficult."* Female accountant, early forties, three pre-school age children, works full time.

This quotation from a partner of a small provincial firm was at odds with the experiences of an accountant at a large multi national firm based in the same city. Whilst the former respondent felt that her clients had firm views about acceptable working practices, the latter felt that some of her clients were surprised at the hours that they, as auditors, worked in their clients' premises. She felt that the working hours were sometimes driven by the nature of the work, the unexpected complications that arose during annual audits, and the travel time involved with working away from the office, rather than by clients' demands for long hours.

***Interviewer: It's not that clients want you to be on site from 9 till 9 or something? Not at all, in fact they're quite shocked when they go home and you're still there. It's driven by, the problem is I think it's the nature of the job, because it's very abstract.*** Female accountant, late twenties, works flexi hours, one child under 5

From the previous chapter, it is evident that increasing competition for fewer, larger contracts has led to greater work pressure. Within my research it emerged that some clients appear to have an influence over professionals' working hours. The need to maintain their client base resulted in some professionals' working lives being longer and more demanding. In addition, visibility within the office, the need to be the first in and last out, is a recognised phenomenon across the two professions and respondents accepted that this may have a detrimental effect on shorter hours workers' promotion prospects. So far, therefore, it is clear that non-standard working can impact on access to training opportunities, either through employees missing training events held on their non-work days, or through insufficient time to take up such opportunities or through deliberate management approaches to training for those on non-standard hours. What is yet to be explored, and what forms the next area for consideration, is the impact that cultural expectations concerning time and the use of time within the workplace have on career progression for those working non-standard hours.

### **Cultural and organisational expectations**

Throughout the interviews, there were key issues arising concerning the impact that non-standard working would have on career progression. Such issues

included cultural expectations concerning caring responsibilities and roles, the importance placed on existing, organisational norms, and the impact of external clients' and market expectations about the professions.

This section examines each of these areas in turn. There is an implicit regularity and series of cultural expectations, at the heart of many learning and employment activities, including time spent at university, hours in work, length of particular training periods. For example, many activities within society fall within anticipated time periods; three year degree courses, five day working weeks, two week periods of summer annual leave. Deviation from such regularity and from the professional norm identifies those adopting non-standard working practices as 'other'. Some of these concerns have already been highlighted in the analysis of the interviews to date. Architects and accountants alike have commented on the need to work long hours in order to meet the expectations of clients and to demonstrate a 'suitable level of commitment'. Chapter five highlighted how, for the majority of those surveyed, training for their profession started immediately after either further or higher education courses. Very few respondents undertook their training on a part time basis or joined as 'mature' entrants to their chosen professions. Such expectations form another layer of an occupation or profession's culture. The degree to which these expectations shape a profession's ability to change or adapt to reflect changes in labour market structure or composition of their professional group needs further consideration.

Organisational or professional organisations are not only concerned with working hours and length of training period. Concern also focuses on age appropriate and gender appropriate activities. It not unusual for women in their 20s and 30s to be viewed as less committed to developing a career due to the possibility of pregnancy and childrearing. In addition, gender specific expectations also affect assumptions about men's interactions with the labour market. Men are expected to be primarily focused on their careers (Hakim's 'work first' model), compared with women who are expected to make family their first priority. Men who choose to have a dual focus to their working lives, combining both professional and family commitments, are viewed as less committed, as evidenced in Alan's earlier example.

In this study, respondents highlighted the perceptions of gender or age 'appropriate' activities which have impacted on their decisions to adopt non-standard working practices. As documented earlier, Alan, a male architect, planning on working part time to meet childcare needs, faced some difficulties gaining agreement to his working hours from employers who were used to a traditional model of full time male employment. As an architect in his mid-thirties, his decision to prioritise caring and home responsibilities over his career development was viewed as unusual by his practice. The possibility that the two priorities could be combined was not fully countenanced.

Alan also highlighted a very interesting point about the standard career pattern of, mainly male, architects. He explained that the standard architect would be assumed to join a practice after completing his Part 2 professional qualification, and train for a year in a practice, before returning to complete his Part 3, certified, qualification. The architect would then join a practice or a series of practices to gain experience in a number of fields, generally working long hours for low salaries, before moving into more senior roles within the practice. By the time an architect had reached 'his' mid-thirties he would be expected to be at a middle management stage, bringing in his own work, having developed a niche within that practice. At this point, many architects are faced with the difficult choice of continuing to work as an employee within a practice, branching into self employment, or moving into a related or peripheral area of the profession such as lecturing or journalism. This was the 'norm' that faced the architect when he chose to move away from the full time, job-running role<sup>66</sup>, and towards a career based on non-standard working practices.

### **The gendering of the professions**

Such normative expectations are not specific to the architecture profession. Amongst the accounting respondents, one interviewee faced a number of difficulties gaining an initial training position, having adopted a fairly 'non-standard' approach to her further education and degree studies. Having moved to Britain from Spain in her early twenties, the accountant had returned

to further education to gain English language qualifications before embarking on a finance degree. Her degree course was interrupted by the birth of her child.

She felt that, when she was applying for trainee accountancy placements, her non-standard background prejudiced some employers against her.

*When I came to England, I was 21 at the time and I couldn't speak any English so I thought I'd go to college for a year to learn the language so that I could get a job, because the kind of job that I was used to in Spain was fairly skilled, so I didn't want to go back to basics, and I started studying a language and 6 years later I came out of university with a degree. It was all completely unplanned. Some people have like 2 years studying and then one year placement in industry and then one final year in university. I kind of had one full year at uni. then one full year after my child, and then one full year at uni. Then I went back part time and went back full time the following year. It took me longer than usual but I got there in the end. I applied to lots of firms I suppose for over three to four months, with not even being offered interviews, I don't know why, I suppose it was a bit of a combination. A, my background was very unusual, firms are used to getting standard people, B I was naïve enough at the beginning to mention the fact that I had a child, and I think people make assumptions about you, if all they know is that you're a studying Mum, they'll make assumptions that I didn't need them to make thank you very much."* Female accountant, mid twenties, one child, works full time.

This respondent felt that prospective employers made gender specific assumptions about her ability to manage her training and caring responsibilities. Her curriculum vitae was also unusual compared with many accounting graduates who often enter university straight from A' level education and who graduate after a three or four year course. An organisational norm of a trainee accountant would not include the possibility of child caring responsibilities. As has been outlined in earlier chapters, the professional accountant was identified by characteristics that were 'not female' (Kirkham and Loft 1993). This identity still, to some extent, exists. Thus the continuing assumption is of entrants who demonstrate commitment through a predominantly 'male' pattern of long hours and a 'work first approach'.

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<sup>66</sup> Job running is one of the key roles of an architect. The term refers to the process of tendering for work, hopefully being commissioned and then leading the project from start to completion.

An architect also commented on the assumptions made within the profession towards women as mothers. Motherhood was perceived by some as incompatible with a career in architecture.

*"Well if you really want to practice as an architect, you've got to hide the fact that you're a mother. That was [long hours and inflexibility] one of the reasons that I thought I'm only going to work with people who appreciate the fact that I'm a woman and I'm a mother and a wife and I've got to have a life as well apart from architecture. I work with people who don't put pressure on me."* Female architect, self employed, one child under 5

As Crompton and Harris (1997) argue, employers are more likely to focus on the 'job role' of men versus the 'gender role' of women. Indeed, studies of labour market engagement have often focused on this male 'job role' versus a focus on the 'gender model' of women. It follows that women are firstly defined by their sex, then by their occupational abilities, as illustrated in the example outlined above. Kirkham (1993:511) states:

*"We must reconsider the category of gender. It is often used to articulate social understanding of sexual differences in specific contexts, thereby it follows that occupations and activities as well as people have gendered identities."*

Historically, industrial sociology and labour market research have focused first on the firm or the organisation (for example Braverman 1974); then on men and women in work (Hakim 1987, 2001, 2003, Cockburn 1983) and now more recently on the home and work interface, (Crompton 1997, Purcell 1999). Thus when women apply for positions in 'male type' occupations, they are firstly measured by factors relating to their gender (are they in key childbearing age groups? what home commitments do they have?), and then by factors relating to their occupation and skills.

Kirkham and Loft (1993) provide a useful consideration of the development of the professional accountant. The professional accountant came to be something that was 'not a woman'. As part of the professionalisation process of distancing the accountancy profession from clerks, a gendered as well as occupational hierarchy developed. The professional bodies of accountancy used gendered concepts of professionalism to establish their position. The construction of occupational associations from 1870 onwards led to the creation of the professional accountant and subsequently to the gendered

definition of the role. The gendering of occupations was encouraged. In addition, female employment was constructed around notions of the domestic sphere reinforced through education.

To use accountancy as an example, within this profession, as the 1870 Education Act opened up education for working class women and men as well as middle class women, more people were gaining the general levels of education needed for clerkships. The work was gradually becoming feminised and in a direct response to this, wages decreased with both salaries and status gradually driven down. Clerkships disappeared as employers viewed clerks less as apprentices and potential partners and more as employees. In contrast, professional accounting (and thus accountants) became constructed as a public and serious matter, and thereby unsuited to women. This gender structuring of a profession was not limited to accountancy. The professional architect had developed through two avenues: (i) the wealthy young male who chose to pursue architecture as a hobby and (ii) the artisan who sought to gain a living through a series of apprenticeships and traineeships. In both these instances, the concept of a female architect was not considered. The profession developed as one that was allied both to the professional societies that drew heavily on the model set by the Royal Society, a bastion of male scientific society, and to the building and construction industries that were, and are, heavily dominated by men. Thus its working practices are essentially determined by 'male' gendered working constructs, such as full time hours, with domestic responsibilities undertaken by a home-based female.

### **The impact of gender on professional specialisation**

Non-standard working is predominantly gendered female because of the larger numbers of women compared with men working on non-standard contracts. It can thus be argued that many of the arguments concerning occupational gender typing can also be applied to occupational typing by working practices.

Through continued gender typing, women and men may be allocated different positions when entering a firm. Whilst workers may rank jobs in terms of desirability and rewards, employers rank workers in terms of their skills and commitment to work. This latter point often leads employers to rank men

ahead of women in the labour market (Maume 1999). The evaluation of worker characteristics differs by gender. Males with young children are often viewed as stable potential employees, needing to work hard to provide for their family. As outlined in an earlier section, when an architect in his mid-thirties applied to work part time, his employers viewed this request unfavourably. Working in a male dominated profession, the employers were used to the model of a male full time employee supported by a non or part time working female.

Women with young children, however, are seen more as a potential disruption to employing organisations, as their actions and drivers are more likely to be determined by their caring responsibilities rather than by their work responsibilities. A female partner in a small architectural practice explained how this approach was still prevalent within the profession.

*"You see, I think it's very short-sighted for employers to think 'oh, I'm not going to employ a woman because she's going to go off and get pregnant.' This is in the back of half of their minds. Or, 'if we do get somebody, then they're going to be gone for half a year.'" Female architect, self employed, mid forties, two school age children.*

Such an attitude is not simply the preserve of the architecture profession. A female trainee accountant with two young children also encountered this problem when applying for training positions. She felt that potential employers were making assumptions about her commitment and potential based on her caring role rather than on her academic achievements.

### **Changes to the gender typing of professions**

Women who move into traditionally male jobs often do so because of changes in the labour market structures, or due to demand in some areas outstripping supply, or because men re-evaluate and exit certain positions. For example, returning to the example of the accounting clerks discussed earlier; in 1911 21 per cent of clerks were female, by 1981 this figure had risen to 74 per cent, (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990).

*"There is much research showing that how an occupation is viewed by the organisation varies with gender composition. As occupations become more 'female' they are increasingly viewed as depositories for female entrants into the firm. In these occupations, women find that their skills are overlooked and that they are denied training opportunities. These*



*dynamics result in lower pay and failure to attain managerial positions. But for men, increasing representation of women in an occupation poses problems for the organisation's clients and may disrupt workplace morale. To alleviate these strains, men are more likely to move to managerial positions as women's presence in the origin job increases."* (Maume op. cit. 489).

When one examines the role of non-standard working within occupational structures and hierarchies, it is clear that there are many similarities with the role of gender. Amongst the respondents surveyed, it emerged that those working shorter or more non-standard hours felt that their careers had been affected by their working practices when compared with their full time equivalents. Just as professions become defined as 'not female' and 'not part time' so, for the majority of respondents working other than full time, non-standard working has come to be defined as 'not male'.

### **Professional sidelining – an impact of non-standard working?**

A female architect in her mid forties who had worked for her current practice for over 10 years had experienced what she felt to be a clear 'sidelining' in terms of career prospects when she moved from full time to part time hours. She had found that the projects offered to her, and the variety of work available, were limited by her working status. Having worked on a number of large and expensive projects when she first joined the practice as a full time employee, her work gradually became more limiting and she found that any form of career progression was impossible.

*"You have to prove yourself more to meet expectations that you're not able to take on responsibilities. If you only work two and a half days, you're much more restricted in what you can do, if you have proved yourself then you're treated slightly better and they're loathe to promote somebody who works 4 days, I was in the same position, several years back, I was only promoted when I returned to full time and I was viewed as 100 per cent committed."* Female architect, early fifties, full time, senior school age children

Despite being promoted to associate level following her return to full time hours, 'Debbie' felt that she was actually 'professionally sidelined'. The practice was expanding and the partners felt that a dedicated human resources representative was needed. At the same time, Debbie found that her workload

was fairly light and she was identified as the most appropriate senior member of staff to take on the role. She stated that it was not her choice to move into the human resources role but that, as she was committed to the organisation and a HR representative was needed, she took up the necessary duties. Furthermore, Debbie felt that, after taking on this role, she was only consulted on HR and training issues rather than other, professional issues.

*“So I became rather peripheral, only usefully fulfilling certain functions.”*

She found it hard to attribute being placed in this role directly to having only recently returned from part time hours, or to being one of only a few female associates in the office. She did, however, feel that the purely architectural posts were being filled by those who had continually worked on full time contracts and who thus had proved that they were ‘100% committed’.

In a follow up interview, she outlined how she had been subsequently promoted into a more senior project director post but was still responsible for some of the HR functions, despite requesting that she could give up that role and focus on her professional specialisms. She appeared to be having continuing difficulties within the practice, finding it difficult to define her role or create her own area of specialism or niche. Despite attempts to move away from the HR role, it was with this role that she was most frequently identified.

*“In terms of my directing, nobody tells me what to do, but, it’s not drawing and planning, it tends to be doing what I think I’m better at, directing big projects. I’m not exactly a design architect, nor an HR person, it’s not exactly what I had aspirations to be, I probably think I’m respected in the practice [for HR], it’s a skill which I’ve learned.”*

### **Occupational segregation within the professions**

The above example can be viewed as a form of professional sidelining or occupation segregation, with the higher profile, professionally challenging posts going to those full time ‘committed’ employees. As Crompton (1990) argues, there are different explanations for occupational segregation. Socio-cultural explanations of occupational segregation have much in common with sex-role theories of gender inequality. They point to the fact that women’s paid work often parallels women’s work in the household. In this view, work is not

seen solely as a source of income, but rather also as a primary source of social identity. Thus, using the example of the HR role, it could be argued that the architect was assigned this role due to the human resources role requiring softer, more female, 'people skills' such as mentoring, guidance and support, rather than the harder, technical skills reflected in building design and development.

In contrast, neo-classical economic theories view labour market differences as a reflection of the general differences between what males and females can 'offer' to the labour market. The lack of women in certain occupations or at higher levels is a reflection of their lack of commitment to the labour market and unwillingness to invest in additional human capital such as further qualifications. From another perspective, occupational segregation is a result of rational decision making within the household unit regarding the duties to be undertaken and the optimal way of undertaking these. Both Barbara and Alan's experiences, illustrated earlier, were examples of how the changes to the working practices resulted from rational decision making at a household rather than individual level.

Occupational segregation can also occur *within* an occupation where men and women are differentially recruited into vertically ordered categories. In my research into the architecture profession, areas of specialism appeared to be gender specific. Access and disability issues relating to building design and construction appeared to be driven by the female architects. Indeed, two female architects had been specifically recruited to their current practices because of their specialisms within the area of access. This had been very successful for them both. Both were working part time hours in their previous practices in order to meet childcare demands and, after moving practices, continued to be employed on those hours. They felt that their specific areas of expertise enabled them to work the hours that they wished to. I came across no men who were specialising in the area of access and disability. Neither, however, was it apparent that, due to larger numbers of female architects employed in this area, the specialism had a lower status than other areas of expertise. This is not the case for landscape architects. One respondent indicated that in a professional hierarchy, landscape architects are low down

on the scale. It was inferred that this was due to the specialism being dominated by women, thus reducing its professional status.

*"You shouldn't really ask how non-standard working impacts on career progression, really it's more a question of how does your work area, your specialism, impact on your ability to develop within the profession. Landscape architects who are mainly women come very low down on the professional ladder."* Female architect, early thirties, full time, no children

Within accountancy, there were fewer examples of vertically ordered categories. Within the professional hierarchies, full time employees were more likely to be offered the challenging, higher profile clients and work roles. The higher profile clients were also more likely to lead to promotion and development, conferring status on those who worked on their contracts.

*"[certain employers state that] if 'you're not available at my finger tips, therefore I can't count on you, therefore I'm not going to give you the chunkier more challenging clients. Interviewer: And it's with the chunkier more challenging clients that you get the prestige? Yes."* Female accountant, self employed, full time, no children

The emphasis on long hours and workplace visibility within accountancy meant that full time employees were also more likely to be promoted over their colleagues working non-standard hours.

### **Self segregation**

The example of the segregation of landscape architects into a lower status specialism within architecture had no counterpart in accountancy. Rather, there appeared to be a move towards 'self segregation' of accountants into either the private or public sectors. Those accountants working in the public sector organisation surveyed reported that they had better working conditions than their private sector colleagues and that this was one of the deciding factors in choosing to work in the sector. They acknowledged that their pay wasn't as high as in the private sector and that the work was not always as stimulating. However, there was general agreement that the public sector supported non-standard forms of working offered very good employee conditions. An accountant within the public sector was offered a post within a multi-national accounting firm and found, having considered the hours that she

would be expected to work in the private sector, that she would be better off remaining within the public sector.

*"In terms of work life balance it's [the private sector] incredibly hard, I chatted to a friend who does work at Firm XX and said, 'OK what are your working hours?' She said about 55-60 a week, so being the anorak that I am, I put a spreadsheet together and added the hours that I think I work here and the salary that I've got alongside the hours that I would be working at Firm xx and to be honest, pro rata that was very, very little difference. The salary at Firm xx, it looks great and the benefits are considerably higher, and then I took into consideration the intangibles, being away from home three or four nights per week and decided that actually it was going to be of no benefit to me whatsoever, even taking into account the wider experience, the training, the greater progression. I wasn't willing to sacrifice what I'd got at home to achieve that progression."* Accountant, early thirties, no children, working full time, planning on moving to shorter hours.

In this way, the respondent self-selected into a lower status area of work, based on decisions regarding quality of life and her family commitments. She used what she felt to be a 'rational' set of criteria to make her decision. Economic decisions concerning prospective salary level, bonuses and company additions such as health care and share options were compared with her current conditions which included non-contributory pension, flexible hours, a generally shorter working week and the ability to spend time with her family.

It should not, however, be assumed that vertical segregation does not exist within the public sector. A number of accountants working part time felt that their career progression was certainly limited by their working practices. There were organisational and professional assumptions regarding 'appropriate' working hours for differing grades and part time or shorter time working professionals were more likely to be located in less senior positions.

*"I think certainly if you changed your working hours to have non working days, that would be a problem because certainly at senior manager level you're expected to be here and I think that that would have an impact on promotion prospects."* Female accountant, late twenties, no children, full time hours

Such vertical segregation was controlled by a number of factors, not least the role of the varying internal labour markets. Progress through internal labour markets is controlled by a number of factors, including length of service, personal qualities, work experience and qualifications. Hierarchies have to be

rationally justified. One accountant, working for a university, found that, when she wanted to move to part time hours, she was told that her senior level did not lend itself to such working practices. Having pushed for a move to part time hours after returning from maternity leave, she was offered little in terms of training or other options for career development. She finally approached her union, pushed for a tribunal on the grounds of sexual discrimination but moved jobs before this took place due to increasing anxiety and ill-health.

*"I didn't want it to get that far [to a tribunal] because it was getting quite stressful by that point. I had a solicitor that was quite keen on me to keep writing letters, but in the end it was going to turn so nasty, I think, that I'd got to stop. As it turned out, the wheels were already in motion by that point for me applying to come back here [other public sector organisation and previous employer]. I knew that I'd got some sort of get out."* Female accountant, early thirties, works part time, one child, under 5.

As well as using levels of seniority as a form of 'rational justification', formal qualifications are another method of segregating and limiting entrance to professions. As the segregation is so 'rational' it is very difficult to exclude those women with the requisite qualifications. Research undertaken with women leaving the architecture profession (Graft-Johnson 2003) does however demonstrate that such 'rational' segregation can be distinctly gendered. The research found that some women architects reported an education system in some schools of architecture that was heavily gendered and already demonstrating a 'macho' culture of long, late hours, male dominated networks and women heavily over-represented in the administrative and junior school posts.

Davies (1996) argues that increases in the number of women in professions may lead to a transformation from within, a challenge to professional hegemony and a questioning of masculine identity. In medicine however, many women continue to self-select their specialisms to suit non-work commitments (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 1997). When such internal sex segregation persists and is self selected and perpetuated by both women and men, it is likely that this will only change very slowly.

## **'Work first' approaches**

In architecture and accountancy, those women who had reached senior positions had done so by adopting 'work first' approaches. Adopting Hakim's theoretical model (1997, 2002), it may appear that, in order to develop their careers, they had actively chosen to adopt more male approaches to the labour market, placing greater importance on their career development than their home lives. However, this analysis failing to appreciate the impact of life stages and changing family circumstances on decisions about working hours. When these senior female professionals elaborated on their career decisions, many had recognised the likely impact of non-standard working on their future career prospects and had deliberately focused on developing their careers, and reaching senior positions, before attempting to change their working hours.

They had recognised the prevailing organisational or professional norms relating to those working non-standard hours and noted that employees on non-standard contracts faced limitations in their career progression. In response they sought to gain seniority and greater levels of autonomy, before changing their working practices. There is a prevailing view, in the professions, that professional identity is 'not part-time'. The construction of such professional identities depends upon prevailing social and organisational norms and values, and, in a very buoyant economic climate, where specific skills are in short supply, it is possible for professions to become defined not by the dominant sex of their members, but by their skills. In the case of the two female architects specialising in access and disability, the fact that their skills were in short supply enabled them to move into more senior, better paid positions without changing their part time working hours.

Less positively, however, it is also possible for elements of a profession to have a relegated status. Dominant architectural norms focus on the professional engaged in the 'bricks and mortar', hard design side of the profession rather than the 'softer' landscaping and environmental elements. This vertical segregation is compounded by landscape architecture being dominated by women as well as being seen as 'other' when compared with main forms of building design.

Thus a set of dominant norms persists within the professions in question and across occupations as a whole. Professional norms are still closely aligned to

a male, full time employment model, with those who choose to adopt different working practices having to reconcile themselves to possibly negative repercussions on career progression. External labour market dynamics, such as shortages in some skills areas can, to an extent, lessen such impacts, but this is the exception rather than the norm.

The following section considers the approaches adopted by professionals to reconcile their desire to adopt non-standard working practices with their career progression. I have categorised their approaches as: work first; home first; portfolio working and self employment; periphery working; specialisation; and job relegation.

One of the 'work first' respondents, Liz provides an illustrative example. She studied for accountancy following graduation and first worked for a large multi national company, training in a number of their departments. Following certification she decided that she would rather focus on work in a smaller practice and was offered a place at a provincial firm. She was informed at interview that, depending on progress, the practice would expect her to reach partner level within 10 years. She adopted long working hours, working at least 10 hours a day. Her husband is also an accountant in a local firm and, like her, was keen to gain promotion, so also worked long hours. Liz did become a partner within 10 years and so is now a fee earner rather than employee. Whilst this has its benefits in terms of professional status and income, it also means that, being self employed, areas such as maternity leave, holiday leave and sickness absence have to be accounted for out of her own income.

After the birth of her first child, she took six weeks maternity leave and returned to full time hours. Following the birth of twins three years later she took three months leave and then also returned full time. In order to reconcile home and work commitments, she uses a full time nanny and strictly limits her working hours to nine to five, five days per week.

She sees herself as focussing primarily on her career whilst making allowances for home commitments. Similar to the accountants surveyed as part of Crompton and Harris' research, Liz took only career considerations into account when choosing her area of professional specialisation, rather than choosing her specialism to fit around possible future family commitments. She



fits closely with Hakim's perception of a career centred female worker. When asked about the lack of female accountants at senior levels both locally and nationally, Liz commented that personal choice regarding childcare options limited some people's career development. She had found a childcare option that suited her working practices and that she could afford.

*"I mean, I can understand this struggle for family reasons but then again you would think that some people would choose to use childcare. But then perhaps some people choose not to. I find there's not enough hours in the day. I find it absolutely hectic and have to have someone that I can totally trust and rely on to be with the children. I did have one bad experience and she didn't last long. But I don't, I mean people quote feeling guilty about coming to work. But I don't feel that at all, I just feel very concerned that I've got somebody appropriate looking after the children."*

Professions have been constructed as specialist occupations that either have specific traits or bodies of knowledge, or have specific relationships with the market. They thus are distinguished from other occupations with similar remits, aims or job roles. Professions developed as heavily gendered structures, with the majority practising exclusionary strategies to maintain their exclusive membership and keep out both women and those working in ancillary but less valued occupations. As Kirkham and Loft (1993) outlined in their analysis of the accountancy profession, the professional accountant was defined more clearly by what it was not rather than what it was. Thus accountancy became defined as not 'clerks' work' and the accountant was defined as 'not female'. Witz (1992), in her detailed analysis of professional development and closure, notes that many of the practices adopted by professions to maintain their status and exclusivity were essentially gendered. Thus women in the medical profession are heavily over represented in the lower status areas of radiography, physiotherapy and midwifery. Within architecture, more so than accountancy, some specialist areas have lower levels of status. This may be due in part to their being heavily dominated by women, and also perhaps due to their distance from the 'bricks and mortar' focus of the architectural profession.

As considered earlier in this and the preceding chapter, in many instances, the exclusionary strategies practices within the professions apply to those working non-standard hours as well as to women. The fact that women are also more

likely to be working flexible or non-standard hours means that they may experience intensive forms of professional exclusion. To counter this, the majority of those interviewed had chosen to adopt a 'work first' approach to their professional life during the early stages of their career development. Indeed, for this majority, actual or planned changes in their working practices occurred as a reaction to external factors such as caring or training needs rather than as a proactive change. Due to the impact of various life stages, such as family formation, increased caring responsibilities and competing non-work commitments, the majority of those working non-standard hours had chosen to reduce the time spent in the workplace and, to use Chafetz and Hagan's term, to 'satisfice' their home and work commitments.

### **'Home first' approaches**

This section returns to a theme considered in Chapter two, considering the similarities between the attitudes of part time and non-employed workers (Hakim 1996 and 2001). The following example demonstrates how work first approaches to employment in the early stages of a career have had to be adapted to take account of changing home based demands.

This example is a female architect, now in her mid fifties with two grown up children, who still works on a part time (term time) basis. Gina graduated in the early 1980s and took up full time employment as an architect specialising in access issues. Until the birth of her first child, she had a work first approach. She explains that the decision to change her working practices was completely structured by 'environmental' factors including the lack of formal childcare, few relatives nearby to offer informal support, and her husband's higher earnings capacity. In this way, her mindset did not change from 'work first' to 'home first'. Rather her employment prospects compared with her husband's, and their belief that, without formal childcare services readily available, home based childcare was necessary, led her to stay out of the labour market for an extended period. Interestingly, since her children have left home, she prefers to continue to work part time, seeing it as a 'security buffer'. She has accepted that she will not be offered the more interesting roles of job-running or leading on large contracts, but has instead developed a niche in the area of the disability rights laws concerning building access. In this way she has managed

to balance her desire for shorter working hours with a determination to continue developing professionally. Her choices and career history have been shaped by economic and 'environmental' decisions rather than determined by a home centred approach.

Such findings reflect the evidence emerging from a number of reviews of non-standard working, that changes to working hours are often temporary, and are determined to a great extent by changes in the life stage of individuals. In addition, the findings also counter the belief that part time and non-standard workers demonstrate little commitment to their careers and career development, and are thus more like their non-working peers than their full time colleagues.

### **Portfolio working and self employment**

A number of commentators have remarked on an increased move towards 'portfolio working' and self employment in recent years (Leadbetter 1999, Handy 1989). Portfolio working has a number of similarities with 'boundaryless careers', these being working careers that draw on a central skill or profession which is applied differently in different contexts.

Some non-standard working can be viewed as a portfolio or boundaryless career. Several push and pull factors may drive the desire for a portfolio career. The push might include responses to economic and labour market factors, whilst pull factors can include a desire for greater independence, flexibility and choice. Research by Cohen (1999) into portfolio working found that half of the study's respondents saw this form of working as their only choice – but not always in a negative way. Portfolio employment was seen as a rejection of organisational employment and as a desire for freedom from management, bosses and bureaucracy as well as a freedom to innovate and create. It was acknowledged by the respondents to Cohen's study, however, that bureaucracy brings a secure income and regular working hours. In addition, some respondents found it hard to justify to themselves and to others that their approach to working was as 'valid' as other permanent careers. In some instances, respondents to Cohen's research stated that they felt

awkward or 'false' working from home or working on a number of short term projects with no single, large working commitment.

*"Permeating these contradictions [of greater freedom to innovate versus security and regular hours] was a sense that participants were struggling to redefine their notion of appropriate (and socially legitimate) career behaviours. Evident in the interviews (more glibly addressed in the emerging literature) was a sense of struggle to redefine what work and career meant to them, particularly in the face of what they saw as a lack of wider social approval. That is, it appeared that participants has some trouble relaxing into their new situations, always judging themselves (and feeling judged) by prevailing norms or organisational behaviour." (Cohen, 1999:341)*

Within my study, a small number of respondents to the in-depth interviews had made moves towards portfolio working, the majority of them architects. Also of note is the fact that when they were approached for interview, no mention of their portfolio status had been included on their questionnaires. The survey question on number and type of current employment positions offered respondents the opportunity to provide information on up to three positions (their main job and two others).<sup>67</sup> All had recorded their employment status as that of their 'main' form of portfolio working, in three of the four cases being employed full or part-time. One respondent was self employed.

Accountants who moved away from an organisational working structure were more likely to move into self-employment which was structured in a similar way to their previous employment. Amongst the architects who had been, or were, at the time of interview, engaged in portfolio employment, a number of approaches emerged. These included:

- full time employment at junior architect level with tentative moves towards work in journalism and lecturing;
- a previous spell of portfolio working which involved self employed design and build, photography and the management of a charitable trust;
- self employment with some intermittent teaching, journalism and consultancy for various organisations and charities, and

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<sup>67</sup> See questionnaire in appendices, specifically question 18

- a negative experience of portfolio working. The architect had moved into what was believed to be a full time post to find that it was self employed, dependent upon short term, intermittent pieces of work and where he was encouraged not to declare earnings for tax or national insurance.

All my respondents (and Cohen's interviewees) had previous careers that helped them in the development of portfolio working. Indeed, much of their work depended upon existing relationships with clients and drew on the skills that they had developed in either their current main form of employment or in previous positions where they had employee status. Cohen found that some of her respondents welcomed the training that they had undertaken during employment in a larger organisation. This was especially the case now that they were generally unable to afford it. Cost issues also arose as a key factor for my respondents, and drove much of their work related behaviours in terms of retaining links with previous employers, returning to employee status or looking for other forms of income generation.

*"All I'm doing at the moment is keeping my head above water really. I think if I'd had my job, my teaching job, I would have had, it would have been nice to have had a sort of cushion of income. It's not a kind of career progression [portfolio working]. I think, I think a lot of women do that because they want to get the idea - a sense of independence, - of doing something, but I'm not necessarily, I don't think I'm going to be as big as Rogers or anybody."* Female architect, self employed on a number of contracts, one child under 5

Although portfolio working is sometimes portrayed as the antithesis of organisational working, my study has shown that the two can merge, and that organisational work can provide a source of contacts, training, job security and collegial spirit. In many instances it is the security of some organisational employment that enables many of those working on a portfolio basis to undertake this form of work. One architect who worked as a freelance architect and photographer for eight years identified a number of negative aspects associated with working on a smaller scale. He was unable to bid for larger competitions unless he formed a consortium with similar contractors, yet the high levels of competition amongst small self employed architects means that consortium working is rare. Professional indemnity insurance also causes problems for many self employed architects. Unlike other professions, 'locum'

roles do not exist. Self employed architects commissioned to undertake a piece of work cannot bring in another architect to cover for sick, maternity or holiday leave. Their insurance will not cover this. Such problems lead some to reconsider their position as self employed practising architects and to either develop the other areas of their portfolio or to return to employee status. One architect returned to full time employment after a period of self employment, citing the financial pressures of his children's university education as the deciding factor. Employee status, whilst not offering him as much variation in his professional remit, did offer greater levels of job security.

*"I tried the change of being just self employed and a sole architect. That had its technical or practical limitations. Obviously it limited the size of jobs that you were prepared to take on and I didn't really want to employ other staff at that time and get tied up with the CDM regulations<sup>68</sup> which limited the size of contract above a certain number of days on site before you got involved with a whole load of regulations which were fairly tiresome to say the least, so I deliberately kept quite small. But having had a relatively young family, or having started quite late, university [fees] loomed in the not too distant future."* Male architect, mid fifties, now working full time, previously worked part time, three grown up children

In another instance a self employed architect had decided to concentrate on a niche area of high cost design and build for a small number of clients. Much of her work came via 'word of mouth'. In addition she had developed links with a number of charitable organisations and local authorities and had been commissioned to undertake wider design jobs such as urban landscaping, town planning guidance and work in other related fields. This architect's career to date had been based around a number of inter-linking roles and responsibilities.

**Figure 7.1 A portfolio career in architecture**

| Dates     | Working Areas                                                             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1987-88   | Moved to the UK, undertook a postgraduate diploma in Environmental Design |
| 1988-1991 | Architectural assistant at a practice whilst also studying                |
| 1991-1993 | Made redundant. Took her Part 3 qualification (practising                 |

<sup>68</sup> Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | certificate) as well as a post graduate certificate in education (PGCE) and a City and Guilds in Business Management                                                                                                                   |
| 1993-1995    | Lecturing full time at a school of architecture, set up as a sole practitioner, undertaking commissions during the weekend                                                                                                             |
| 1995-1998    | Full time lecturing at a different school of architecture, continuing with her own practice's work                                                                                                                                     |
| 1998-2001    | Part time lecturing in the same school, continuing with her practice's work and caring for her son (born 1998)                                                                                                                         |
| 2001 onwards | Gave up teaching, focussing on her practice and, along with her husband, caring for their son full time. Branching into new areas of work including urban design, formal garden design and advising local authorities on town planning |

The example in Figure 7.2 demonstrates the breadth of architects' experiences within their professional field. It also illustrates how many of the skills developed during one professional career can be applied to 'peripheral' areas of professional work. This issue will be considered more fully in the next section. Portfolio working or the boundaryless career can work for some. However, the security of employee status does attract others to return to full time employment. All of the architects who worked in this way commented that their professional skills enabled them to undertake this work and provided a basis upon which to develop. In most instances, the move to portfolio working and self employment was instigated by a factor such as redundancy, the birth of a child or feelings of restricted career development in their existing position. An interesting consideration is the role that the architect as 'architect-artist' plays in the move to a more portfolio based form of employment. Those respondents who were working on such a basis commented that they enjoyed the 'freedom' associated with working on a number of projects, the ability to 'express' their artistic interests and skills in a number of areas and to develop further skills in areas not associated with more formal, practice based duties of architects. This could be argued to perhaps reflect the origins of architecture in the liberal arts field, and the continued emphasis of schools of architecture on the aesthetic as well as practical aspects of the profession. What is noticeable here is that only one respondent stated that such a move enabled her to spend

more time with her child and provide most of his care. Thus, portfolio working and self employment cannot be seen solely as a means of balancing home and work commitments. If anything, with increased financial insecurity, portfolio workers may face longer working hours and greater encroachment of work on their former days off.

### **Periphery working**

Other researchers have also examined the determinants of employer and/or occupational or professional attachment and commitment. Wallace (1995) and Bridges and Villemez (1991) take differing approaches to the examination of labour market attachment, but both conclude that attachment to occupation and attachment to employer differ. In my study, a number of respondents opted to follow work areas that were related to their professional area, thus remaining attached to their profession, but did not necessarily require them to *practise* within their professional field. A number of reasons were given for these decisions to work on the 'periphery' of their professional area. Some respondents commented that they had tired of practising as architects or accountants and were interested in a change in their professional focus. Others moved into such areas 'accidentally', following redundancy or a career break. In other instances, the decision to work in a peripheral area was driven by non-work commitments. Again, and similar to those respondents already considered, movement within the profession but across different employers is determined primarily by neo-classical models of employee mobility and economic choice. Movements into or out of the profession are determined much more by a sense of calling or vocation.

Examples of periphery working within my research were very similar to portfolio examples, with the significant difference being that the respondents no longer practised. Such examples included:

- Full time lecturing;
- Journalism;
- Working within another department in the same organisation;
- Working for a professional body or lobby group, and



- Management positions without a practice element.

In all the examples, the professionals needed experience of practice in order to work in their current position. They still expressed commitment to their profession and, with the exception of one respondent, had no intention of moving into another professional field. When opportunities for inter-firm movement are available and the inter-firm labour market is buoyant, professionals are very unlikely to leave their profession but may leave their current area of specialism (McDuff 2000). Movements between firms and areas of specialism are generally determined by general economic factors such as salary levels, opportunities for promotion, working conditions and so on. McDuff argued that, unless conditions are uniformly poor, professionals are unlikely to choose to leave the profession, choosing rather to change employer. In the same way, working in a periphery area maintains a level of professional attachment but provides opportunities for a change of professional focus.

When examining decisions to move into periphery areas from a career development perspective, it was clear that none of the respondents felt that such a move had had a negative impact on their careers. Indeed a number of the respondents felt that they were better equipped to work on the periphery, preferring the lecturing or management side of their professional area to the practice side.

*"I feel more comfortable with the management side than with the practitioner side. There are problems with practice, particularly in times of recession."* Lecturer in architecture, practised for 18 years.

In other respects, moves into academia, research or teaching had provided respondents with more time for their families and outside interests. There was a general feeling that the practice side of the professions was becoming more demanding in terms of longer working hours and greater levels of competition.

Periphery working in itself may not appear 'non-standard', with the majority of respondents employed on the periphery of practice working full time hours. However, when compared with the majority of the practising professionals,

those fully qualified architects and accountants employed in related areas peripheral to practice can be seen as working in an area that is not 'standard'.

Chapter 1, which discussed the model of the flexible firm developed by Atkinson (1987), outlined two components of a successful flexible firm; the core and periphery. From a demand side and employer led approach, the periphery workers were able to provide labour at points of high demand, often working on short or fixed term contracts and thus, when Atkinson first published articles on this topic, (in the mid eighties), ineligible for full time employee benefits such as sick pay, holiday entitlements and redundancy. In this respect, the use of periphery workers was of benefit to employers but of little benefit to those employees looking for permanent employment. However, when examining the concept of periphery working from a professional perspective, working at a distance from practice insulates the professional from general economic changes. Such changes, including recession, can impact negatively on both architecture and accountancy in terms of limited vacancies, poorer working conditions for those in employment and competition for a limited number of contracts. In addition, movements to the periphery of the professions reflect ongoing changes to professional forms and remits. As outlined in chapter three, the process of professionalisation is dynamic and thus identity and perceptions of working boundaries are constantly in flux. Those respondents working on the periphery identified themselves as architects or accountants, who had, as a result of changes to their professional interests or to external labour market conditions, chosen to move into a related professional area. Unlike other professionals working on a non-standard basis, those working at the periphery did not feel that their move had had or would have a negative impact on career progression. Conversely, they commented that it had enabled them to perhaps progress further than had they stayed in practice.

*"I've worked in areas that I'd never have had the opportunity to do if I'd solely stayed in practice."* Female architect, early forties, portfolio working, one child under 5

Two other respondents, one an architect and one an accountant, commented that their professional training enabled them to move into other areas more easily than friends or acquaintances who had not had such specialised training.

*"I don't really know what I want to go into. Maybe journalism, maybe design, I'd quite like to work abroad. This training will enable me to do most of those."* Female architect, mid twenties, planning on a career break and career move, no children.

An accountant working for the public sector and having recently completed a part time Masters degree was interested in using this qualification, coupled with her accountancy training, to facilitate a part time move into academia.

*"Yeah, I'm thinking of taking up lecturing with the OU as a part time tutor so that there is a basis to build from in terms of the lecturing sides of things. There's a hell of a lot of opportunities around, primarily in finance and accountancy. That's alright, it's not the side that I really want to go into, I want to go in on the social policy side but having said that, I don't think it's really that important which discipline you're looking at in the first instance."* Female accountant, mid thirties, no children, working full time.

In both these examples, moves away from the core activity of professional practice were being considered as natural developments in career progression. Neither respondent had family responsibilities and both wanted to make the move before considering children.

This chapter has provided a consideration of how non-standard working practices have been experienced or considered by my respondents. It has given a number of examples of non-standard working, shown the effects that these have had, or are perceived to have, on career development, and the existence of core and periphery professional working practices. In addition, the chapter has demonstrated how the accountancy and architecture professions remain heavily defined by notions of traditional 'male' working practices, norms and values.

I have explored how, for some, such a definition continues to limit the opportunities for career development and progression for those pursuing a career that is other than the full time, 'standard' model. For others, the experiences of non standard working within the professions have contributed to career moves towards the periphery of professional practice. What such examples mean for future professional development and change is considered in the concluding chapter.

## **Conclusion**

In the preceding chapters, the study has developed analyses of changing labour market practices, with particular reference to the two professions of accountancy and architecture. It has explored the impact that changes to individuals' working practices have had on their career development and progression, comparing and contrasting the experiences of the two groups of professionals, and has focused in particular on a number of non-standard working practices: part time working; term time hours; portfolio working; peripheral employment and self employment. This builds on an established usage of the term 'non-standard working practices' within discussions of the highly qualified, professional labour market (Epstein et al, Crompton et al and Hoque and Kirkpatrick op cit). My study set out to explore the following research themes: the various forms of working practices and strategies adopted by architects and accountants; the impact of professional norms on movements towards non-standard working; the role of the market in the development of non-standard working practices; the impact of non-standard working practices on professional career development, and the implications of a movement towards greater labour market flexibility for the development of the professions.

### **Non-standard working practices and the strategies adopted by professionals**

The strategies adopted by those working, or hoping to work, non-standard hours, were considered in great detail in chapter seven. There, a number of 'categories' of non-standard working professionals were identified. These related to those experiencing: professional sidelining; occupational segregation; self segregation; 'work first' approaches; 'satisficing'; 'home first' approaches; portfolio working, self employment; and periphery working.

Throughout the study, reference has been made to the early theoretical model of the flexible firm (Atkinson, 1987). In particular, aspects of that model, specifically the concept of core and periphery workers, have been explored from the perspective of specialised working practices. Unlike the evidence that

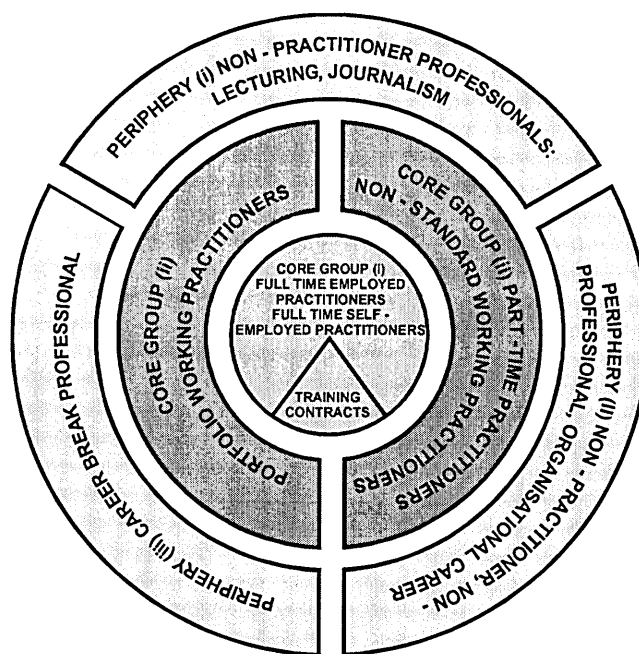
supported the development of Atkinson's model, the movements towards increased working time flexibility studied here, are as much driven by the professions' attempts to retain valued staff, as by profit maximisation efforts on the part of organisations.

As I have suggested in chapter one, and shown in chapters six and seven, the concept of core and periphery workers is one that can be expanded to encompass the labour market strategies of professionals working in accountancy and architecture. The model that has emerged from my study (illustrated below in Figure 8.1) is one that still maintains a 'core workforce', although this has two components: (i) core full time practitioners, including full time trainees, and (ii) core part-time or non-standard time practitioners. The outermost periphery layer comprises three sub-groups: (i) non-practitioner professionals, including those in lecturing and journalism; (ii) the non-practitioner professionals who have moved into an organisational career outside their professional specialism but within their employing organisation, (from this research, such professionals were more likely to be accountants) and (iii) the professionals planning (or on) career breaks, who intend to return to practice.

Unlike the original model developed by Atkinson, my model, including the location of respondents at the core or periphery of their professional practice, has largely been determined by the, often constrained, choices employees make in terms of their working practices, rather than by management strategies, (a best fit approach).

As can be seen from the model, the majority of my respondents fitted into the core group, albeit, into the second layer of core employees. Most had adopted, or expected to adopt, non-standard working practices which enabled them to maintain their professional practice. Nonetheless, these respondents commented that their career progression and professional development had been, or was likely to be, affected by their non-standard working practices.

**Figure 8.1 The flexible firm revisited – the case of the professions**



### **The impact of professional norms on movements towards non-standard working**

Time deviance emerged as a key theme in this research. There remains a normative tendency for professionals to adhere to a 'long hours, high office visibility' culture within individual organisations, and the perpetuation of predominantly masculine workplace cultures continues. Any deviations from this 'norm' often prove detrimental to career development. Key issues in the research included the continuing identification of professionals, as a group, with a 'work first' approach to their careers, the need to 'put in' long hours both at work and in social circles and to demonstrate 'commitment' to the profession. The professions, as a whole, have continued to be gendered 'male'. Evidence about the professions of architecture and accountancy, documented in chapter three, confirmed that, from their beginnings, the professions have been defined as essentially 'not female'. Despite the greater movement of women into the professions, dominant ideologies of professional formation continue to have, at their core, the notion of a full time, 'work first' male professional, supported by a home based wife. Thus the social construction of the two professions continues to be dominated by a 'male'

model of labour market engagement and progression. Both architects and accountants highlighted the power dynamics evidence within their employing organisations. They commented on the 'high office visibility' and 'high organisational commitment strategies' deemed necessary to ensure progression. As outlined in chapters two and three, the professions have always been constructed as 'not female' and thus 'work first' rather than 'home first' or 'work and home equal' constructs. This norm prevails and thus the power dynamics remain strongly skewed towards full time, often male, professionals. Those who chose to adopt other working practices continue to be viewed as 'other' than the dominant norm and are thus treated as time deviants. As highlighted in chapter seven, such prevailing attitudes go unchallenged. Whilst individuals work at the 'edges' to improve their work life balance and may have local level support for working practices other than the 'norm' of full time hours, the dominant construct of a 'committed' professional remains that of a full time, long hours worker. It is against this backdrop that this consideration of non-standard working practices has taken place.

I have shown that non-standard working practices are increasingly common within the labour market. Often they are adopted to meet the competing demands of work and homes lives and because of this, non-standard working practices are most commonly associated with women, often mothers. Related to, and sometimes shaping this association, childcare has played a key role in the choice of working hours and patterns amongst respondents to this study. Chapter six has shown how, for many respondents, the deciding factor in moving to non-standard working patterns was childcare. For some, a move to part-time or flexible hours was driven by their desire to spend more time with their children, for others, such moves were driven by the costs or availability of childcare. Female respondents were more likely than male to cite childcare as the deciding factor in their move to non-standard working.

Thus whilst the identity of a professional has traditionally been gendered male, so non-standard working practices have been, and continue to be, gendered female. This results in a differential impact on individual take up of, and employer readiness to accept, these working practices. My research has demonstrated how in some work settings, female, non-professional staff are offered part time or flexible hours contracts, unlike their professional, and often

male, colleagues. Both male and female professionals were expected to work long hours and thus to 'commit' to their profession. All those respondents who were interviewed face to face believed that taking up non-standard working practices would have a detrimental impact on career progression and development. Even in companies where non-standard, family friendly working practices were encouraged by management, their take up was patchy, and was perceived to be poorly regarded by professional peers.

The location of professionals within specialist labour markets does afford them some autonomy over their working hours and methods. It might be thought that their specialist levels of knowledge, and the relative scarcity of this knowledge base, would enable them to determine which working practices would best suit their home and work needs. This was not the case for those surveyed as part of this study. Whilst respondents did have more autonomy over their working hours and workloads, the relative scarcity of their skills meant that they often had very large workloads, while the highly specified and individualised nature of much of their work precluded others from taking on their additional work or 'job sharing' their position.

Examples cited in chapter three showed that ownership of a distinct professional knowledge base did not, necessarily give professionals greater opportunities to determine their working practices than were available to those working in less specialised fields.

### **The role of the market in the development of non-standard working practices**

The study has explored the two professions of architecture and accountancy and has examined how they have developed as well as their relationships with the state and the market and with their patrons. The research has extended Larson's concept of a 'professional project', by exploring not only relationships between professional groups, but also those within professional groups, in particular the personal strategies or projects adopted by those professionals looking to balance their home and work commitments. The study has aimed to develop the conceptual model of the 'professional project', by examining, both at the micro and macro levels, the strategies adopted by professional groups



and individual professionals. This approach differs from that taken by Larson who focused on the external rather than internal processes of professionalisation.

I have shown how the market and patrons of the professions play a part in determining working practices. Some of the contemporary literature on non-standard working highlights how changes to working practices and hours of work have been developed by employers to meet the growing demands of the economy, and to provide cost-effective ways of undertaking work tasks. Within this study, through interviews with professionals working non-standard hours and also through discussions with others representing the professions, it became clear that there are two apparently competing, but in this study, related drivers for non-standard working practices within the professions. At a practice or employer level, changes to working practices, including hours, have principally been driven by the demands of the market. In both professions, growing levels of competition within the professional market resulted in increased working during 'anti-social' hours. As discussed in Chapter Six, a human resources manager in a large accounting firm outlined how changes to computer networks had facilitated more extensive international co-working, often requiring those based in the UK offices to work outside standard office hours. A number of employees had been given remote access to the company's computing network, enabling them to work from home. Whilst this was a positive development for many of the professionals, what, in reality had driven this change was the need to extend the capabilities of the UK office.

At an employee or professional level, drivers for non-standard working patterns have principally been non-work based. Drivers have included childcare responsibilities and training and development. Developments in technology, instigated by the employing practice, including remote access to office computer networks and the provision of mobile 'phones and laptops, have had a discernible impact. Respondents viewed these positively and stated that such developments had enabled them to develop 'business cases' for increasing their 'working from home hours' or changing the hours they worked. They frequently remarked that they would undertake small, work related, tasks on official non-work days, and would often work at home in the evenings after a full day in the office. They did not present this as an encroachment on their

work life balance, but rather as a good way of reconciling their home and work/client demands.

Less positively, other respondents commented that, in times of increased competition, clients often expected them to be available at short notice, often late into the day. One architect commented that little consideration was given by some clients to people's home commitments. Those who did have non-standard working practices did not, in general, inform their clients of these practices, preferring to be on hand, often via mobile phone, whenever required. Thus the potential role for clients and the market in encouraging the development on non-standard working practices is of key theoretical importance.

It can thus be seen that the adoption of non-standard working practices by individuals, and the provision of such practices by employers are both driven and constrained in a number of ways. As highlighted above, individuals report feeling constrained in their ability to inform clients of their non-standard working practices, perhaps fearing that clients will view them as less 'committed' or capable professionals. Individuals also reported being constrained by childcare issues, be they the cost or availability of childcare provision or personal choices over what they feel is 'right' or 'appropriate' for them and their children. The impact that social values and norms about 'appropriate' roles for mothers and fathers play here can not be understated. Thus those moving to non-standard working may choose to do so to enable them to spend more time with their family (a driver) but also be constrained in their ability to balance their home and work commitments by factors external to them such as the cost and availability of care provision.

Both employers and individuals may also be aided in their take up or promotion of non-standard working practices by improvements to technology, enabling a move away from total office based workers. Individuals and employer representatives both highlighted such changes as enabling moves away from solely office based employment. Whilst individuals reported being able to balance their home and work needs more easily, employers reported on the increased ability it gave them to conduct business across countries and time zones.

Legislative issues concerning the right of members of staff to request moves to more flexible ways of working have also impacted on employer and individual moves towards non-standard working practices. Whilst employers do not have to agree to such changes, the existence of such legislation does at least encourage discussion and promote different ways of working. For employers, the legislation highlights the growing importance that is being placed on such forms of working.

This is not to state however, that the employer and individual moves towards more flexible working practices are signalling a rapid trend in such practices. The professions under examination continued to be dominated by full time employees and the impact that moves to non-standard working practices had on individuals' career development is considered now.

### **Non-standard working lives – impacts on career development?**

Despite the difficulties that they experienced meeting home and work demands, the majority of respondents demonstrated a continuing commitment to their profession. Amongst the accountants there were those who saw their commitment to their profession as secondary to their organisational commitment and were willing to consider movements out of their professional sphere and into an organisational career. This was not necessarily to balance their home and work lives but to further their career in an area in which they had interest. No architects highlighted that they were considering leaving their professional area, they were more likely to speak of their profession in terms of an 'vocation' than accountants and in a number of instances embodied the 'art architect' described by Kaye, (op cit), who viewed artistic integrity and interest above monetary or other material returns.

There has been a tendency, in some of the literature, to oversimplify non-standard working as a 'home-first' approach to employment (Hakim, 1987, 1996, 2000, 2002). In my study, many of the respondents' careers had been characterised by full time training periods, followed by full time qualification/trainee positions, with subsequent family formation and child-rearing leading to shorter working hours or career breaks. Treating full time and part time workers as distinct groups is an inappropriate approach which

underestimates the extent to which, during a career, workers (especially women) may practice different forms of working. As an approach, it also reinforces the conception of part time employment as 'other,' compared with a full time norm, thus maintaining the division between the full time, 'standard' forms of employment and the 'non-standard' other.

My usage of the term non-standard also, to an extent, maintains this division. I was aware of this throughout the study and have attempted to go some way towards addressing this by expanding the flexible model developed by Atkinson (1987) to include two groups of core, professional workers. My model (figure 8.1) therefore places both 'standard' and 'non-standard' groups at the core of professional practice. However, the model also acknowledges that professionals working full time still retain a prominent position within the professional hierarchy. What this study has attempted to demonstrate is that for an increasing proportion of the professional labour market, 'standard' working practices are no longer the norm.

Although most of the professionals in my study expected, and accepted, a temporary hiatus in their career development, they were not planning to move into different areas of work or choosing a lower job status. On the contrary, commitment to their profession was generally stronger than commitment to the organisation, and job changes were more often changes into related fields, rather than out of the professional arena.

Access to training was an area of concern for many of the respondents. The development of a specialised knowledge base is central to the continuation of the professional project. Yet for some of the respondents, it was not possible to fit training into shortened weeks. Not only are training courses generally planned around a full time work model, but for many working part time, even one day training courses could not be fitted into their shorter working schedules. Respondents commented that, despite changes to their working hours, their workloads often remained the same, and in such cases some areas of work and professional development had to be sacrificed. Those who were self employed often found training was too expensive to be paid for out of their income. Individuals working on the periphery of professional practice, felt that they had become dislocated from professional practice training, often

having access to peripheral training programmes, but unable to keep up their practice specific skills.

This factor was central to many respondents' views that adopting non-standard working practices would have a damaging impact on career progression and promotion. Indeed, there was a sense that this was unavoidable. Many had adopted strategies to allow for this, taking up training in advance of changing their hours, or gaining promotion before moving to different forms of working. Others commented that they had long term career plans which included 'down time' periods in which they did not expect to be promoted or move back into professional practice, until they returned to 'standard' working hours. As highlighted in chapter seven, there was no feeling that this could be countered or challenged, although many felt that it ought to be. The belief of one respondent, that his move to part time hours would signal a 'nose dive' in terms of career development and progression is evidence of the degree of resignation or inevitability voiced by respondents regarding the impact of non-standard working towards their career progression.

Representatives from the professional interest groups highlighted that such problems were common and perpetuated by the 'traditional' structure of the professions. Whilst some of these respondents argued that improvements to the career prospects of non-standard workers could only be achieved through legislation and state involvement, others argued that the professions had to change themselves, and that non-standard working had to be mainstreamed and promoted as a business benefit.

## **Policy Implications**

The policy implications of this study's evidence are wide ranging, and can perhaps be grouped into three areas: government or statutory; employers and professional bodies.

At a government level, as documented in the first chapter, non-standard employment and the promotion of work life balance issues have become key areas of policy for the Department for Trade and Industry and concerns such as the Women's Unit within the Cabinet Office. Gradual changes to legislation have now resulted in part time workers receiving the same statutory rights as

their full time peers, and in parents being able to request flexible working hours. The implications from this research are that, despite being aware of greater government support for non-standard working some employers continue to object to staff members changing their practices and employees continue to accept and thus reinforce the negative impacts of moves to such working practices. A policy objective at national government level should be to continue to promote the business benefits of non-standard working, and, in light concern over increases in absenteeism, to endorse more flexible approaches to employment as a valuable way of cutting levels of absenteeism and enabling employees to meet the competing demands of home and work. Coupled with this is the need to continue the expansion of suitable and affordable childcare available within all localities and for those on all levels of income. Those who moved to non-standard working after the birth of children commented on the 'pull factors' of both the desire to care for their child(ren) and the costs of formal childcare.

At an employer level, the research highlighted how, for many respondents, whilst their employer at a national or director level might endorse non-standard working practices and work life balance, most decisions concerning changes to working practices were made at a local level by line managers. Furthermore, respondents highlighted how new entrants and those seeking promotion would often emulate their superiors and adopt long working hours in an attempt to demonstrate 'commitment' to the organisation. For employers, the gradual move towards more non-standard working practices means that many of their employees will, at some point, experience the 'career' hiatus' associated with a move, however, short term to non-standard working. Supporting the role of such working practices could cut staff turnover and ensure the retention of committed and highly skilled members of staff.

At a professional body level, non-standard working practices need to be moved out of the 'minority issues' arena and highlighted as an area of key importance to the ongoing development of the professions. The role that long working hours and the high visibility culture play in career progression need to be challenged. This should start during professional training. Professional bodies have direct input to the development of the trainee curriculum. Placing as much emphasis on working practices as on other aspects of the curriculum

would enhance the profile of non-standard working and the importance of maintaining a healthy work and life balance.

### **The future of working practices within the professions**

Whilst professional identities continue to be associated with male, full time norms, and non-standard working practices are associated with female, less committed, working mothers, differential experiences of labour market progression will continue. This thesis has demonstrated that the professional project is dynamic, and that the professions' internal structures and memberships are constantly developing. The experiences of my respondents suggest that those adopting non-standard working practices have less rapid career progression than their full time peers. The study has also demonstrated that, in the selected professional groups, the number and forms of non-standard working practices are increasing. Along with changes to working practices driven by employer demands, increases in the number and forms of non-standard working practices may enable more professionals to make changes to their working structures in order to reconcile home and work demands. Such strategies continue to rely upon a variety of agencies, including reliable and affordable childcare providers and employers that enable such changes to take place.

Indeed, professionals' methods of adopting non-standard working practices, as explored in this study, illustrate a number of strategies to define individual 'professional projects'. Larson (1977) outlined how professions have developed themselves to gain market power and defined this as a form of 'professional project'. In my study, non-standard working professionals are adopting strategies which attempt to maximise their (somewhat constrained) market power, whilst meeting their home needs. The professional project is dynamic, dependent both on the wider labour market situation and developments within specific professional fields.

There continues to be a false logic perpetuated by some academic commentators and employers that non-standard working practices equate to an uncommitted workforce (as discussed in detail in chapter two). Such views underestimate the constrained choice that many professionals face when trying

to balance home and work needs. This research has shown that professionals remain committed to their professions, throughout their working lives. The standard model of a working life has only ever been standard for a small section of the labour market. The strategies adopted by many of those interviewed as part of this research include re-entry, at some point, to the full time professional labour market. As discussed in chapter one, and developed throughout this study, labour market processes are dynamic, with all sectors of the labour market adopting more non-standard forms of working. Thus any understanding of the development of the professional project must, at its core, include the realisation that for many, *their* professional project is characterised by a dynamic series of interactions with the professional labour market, rather than a 'standard', single relationship.



## **Appendix 1**

### **Professional bodies listed by respondents to the questionnaire survey**

#### **Architects:**

- Access Association
- Architects Registration Board
- Architecture UK
- Institute of Personnel Development
- Learning Institute
- Royal Institute of British Architects

#### **Accountants:**

- Association of Accounting Technicians
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
- Association of Taxation Technicians
- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants
- Fellow of Chartered Certified Accountants
- Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
- Institute of Management
- Institute of Tax

Appendix 2 – Pilot Questionnaire

This questionnaire forms part of a Ph.D. study into changing working practices within the architecture/accountancy profession. It has been designed in agreement with RIBA/ICAEW and your details have been provided by RIBA/ICAEW. All information provided will be treated in

ABOUT YOUR JOB

This section of the questionnaire is intended to gather information about your current and previous positions within accountancy/architecture, including information on your areas of expertise.

1) What is your current position within your organisation? (job title)

2) How long have you held this position? (in months)

 months

3) Could you list all other positions you've previously held within architecture/accountancy, (including those in other organisations). (please indicate with an asterisk, those positions held during your training period)

|            | Job title | Length<br>(in months) |
|------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| position 1 |           |                       |
| position 2 |           |                       |
| position 3 |           |                       |
| position 4 |           |                       |
| position 5 |           |                       |

4) Are you currently:

employed ☐

self employed ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

both

☐

5) Do you work mainly in the:

public sector

☐

private sector

☐

other (e.g. voluntary sector)

☐

6) Is your organisation:

small, employing under 100 staff

☐

medium, employing 100 – 400 staff

☐

large, employing 400+ staff

☐

7) What is your specific area of expertise (e.g. taxation)?

8) Please list your main responsibilities (including line management and training responsibilities).

## TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

This section looks at qualifications, both professional and academic as well as current training. It aims to provide the research with an overview of the spectrum of qualifications within the architecture/accountancy profession as well as an understanding of the extent of in work training being undertaken.

9) *Please indicate your highest academic qualification:*

- 10) Please list your professional qualifications.
- 11) Please list those qualifications, specified by your employer, as essential for your current position.
- 12) Are you currently undertaking training?
- no ☐ please go to question 16
- yes ☐ please go to question 13
- 13) Please list the training currently being undertaken including the qualification(s) to be achieved.
- 14) Is this training undertaken:
- during working hours ☐
- outside working hours ☐
- both ☐
- 15) Does your employer provide: (multiple responses possible)
- study time ☐
- fees for the training/study ☐
- neither ☐
- other ☐
- 16) With whom did you undertake your professional traineeship?

- 17) Please list your current membership of any professional bodies.

## CURRENT WORKING PRACTICES

This section covers working hours, patterns of working such as part time, flexi time, reasons for changing working hours. Where applicable, there are also questions on childcare and other caring commitments.

- 18) *This question examines differing forms of job tenure across the profession. Please provide details on both your main job and any other freelance, short term positions within accountancy/architecture that you might undertake.*

Is your current contract for a:

|                    | <i>main job</i>          | <i>other 1</i>           | <i>other 2</i>           |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| permanent position | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| short term         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| fixed term         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| self employed      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 19) How many hours (on average) do you work per week

- 20) There are numerous variations to job tenure, please tick your current tenure and any others on which you might have been employed:

|                                                   | <i>currently</i>         | <i>previously</i>        |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| full time (30 hours+)<br>(go to question 23)      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| part time (up to 30 hours)<br>(go to question 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| term time only<br>(go to question 21)             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| annualised hours<br>(go to question 21)           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|                                            |                          |                          |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| zero hours contract<br>(go to question 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| job share<br>(go to question 21)           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below)               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(go to question 21)

21) How long have you been working on this basis ☐ months

22) People who work hours other than full time do so for a variety of reasons. Please tick any that apply to you:

|                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| childcare                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other family caring          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other employment             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| training/study               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other health                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other person's health        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other non work activities    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

23) Do you have any children?

yes ☐

no ☐ (please go to question 26)

The following two questions are looking at issues of childcare. Childcare remains the main reason for changes to working hours. National and European employment policies as well as some employers' in-house policies are

attempting to reconcile the commitments of those with childcare responsibilities. The following questions aim to elicit information on the methods adopted to balance childcare and work commitments.

24) Please indicate the numbers and ages of your children:

0 – 35 months

3 – 8 years

9 – 11 years

12 – 16 years

25) Please list which (if any) forms of childcare you are currently using, and have used at any time in the last 10 years.

|                              | currently            | have used            |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| childminder                  | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| nursery                      | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| school nursery               | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| au pair/nanny                | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| friend/family                | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| after school club            | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

26) Within the next 5 years, do you envisage changing your current working hours?

yes

no  please go to question 29

27) Will your hours:

increase

decrease

- 28) Please could you outline why you envisage making changes to your hours:

-----  
-----

## ABOUT YOURSELF

The next 6 questions will provide the research with a detailed level of information on the characteristics of all respondents.

- 29)            male             female

- 30) Age

- 31) Household composition, does your household comprise:

single person

two person household

multiple adult household  
(non family members)

single adult with children

two adults with children

other family members

- 32) How would you describe your marital status?

single

married



|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| living as couple   | <input type="text"/> |
| divorced/separated | <input type="text"/> |
| widowed            | <input type="text"/> |
| other              | <input type="text"/> |

33) How would you describe your ethnic origin?

|                 |                      |             |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| White           | <input type="text"/> | Indian      | <input type="text"/> |
| Irish           | <input type="text"/> | Pakistani   | <input type="text"/> |
| Black African   | <input type="text"/> | Bangladeshi | <input type="text"/> |
| Black Caribbean | <input type="text"/> | Asian other | <input type="text"/> |
| Black other     | <input type="text"/> | Other       | <input type="text"/> |

34) Do you consider yourself to have a disability that limits your everyday activities?

yes  please specify, optional:  
 -----

no  --

This questionnaire forms the first stage of Ph.D. fieldwork into non standard working practices within the professions. If you would be willing to take part in a further interview on this subject, please complete the details below.

Name: -----

Address: -----  
 -----  
 -----

Daytime Telephone No. -----

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your time and co-operation**

## Appendix 3

### Main Stage Questionnaire – Accountancy

This questionnaire forms part of a Ph.D. study into changing working practices within the accountancy profession. It has been designed in agreement with the Sheffield District Society and has been circulated by the district society. All information provided shall be treated in confidence.

#### ABOUT YOUR JOB

This section of the questionnaire is intended to gather information about your current and previous positions within accountancy, including information on your areas of expertise.

1) What is your current position within your organisation? (job title)

2) How long have you held this position? (in months)

months

3) Could you list all other positions you've previously held within accountancy, (including those in other organisations).  
**(please indicate with an asterix, those positions held during your training period)**

|               | Job title | Length<br>(in months) |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| position<br>1 |           |                       |
| position<br>2 |           |                       |
| position<br>3 |           |                       |
| position<br>4 |           |                       |
| position<br>5 |           |                       |

- 4) Are you currently:
- employed ☐
- self employed ☐
- both ☐
- 5) Do you work mainly in the:
- public sector ☐
- private sector ☐
- other (e.g. voluntary sector) ☐
- 6) Is your organisation:
- small, employing under 100 staff ☐
- medium, employing 100 – 400 staff ☐
- large, employing 400+ staff ☐
- 7) What is your specific area of expertise (e.g. taxation)?
- 8) Please list your main responsibilities (including line management and training responsibilities).

## TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

This section looks at qualifications, both professional and academic as well as current training. It aims to provide the research with an overview of the

spectrum of qualifications within the accountancy profession as well as an understanding of the extent of in work training being undertaken.

9) Please indicate your highest **academic** qualification:

NVQ/BTEC/City and Guilds or equivalent ☐

A' Level or equivalent ☐

Degree ☐

Post graduate qualifications, PG. Dip, MA/MSc etc ☐

Scottish SCE Standard 1,2,3 ☐

Scottish SCE ordinary passes or grades a,b,c ☐

Scottish SCE/SLC/SUPE highers ☐

Other qualifications (**please write in**)

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

10) Please list your professional qualifications.

11) Please list those qualifications, specified by your employer, as essential for your current position.

12) Are you currently undertaking training?

no ☐ please go to question 16

yes ☐ please go to question 13

13) Please list the training currently being undertaken, including the qualification(s) to be achieved (where appropriate).

14) Is this training undertaken:

during working hours ☐

outside working hours ☐

both ☐

15) Does your employer provide: (multiple responses possible)

study time ☐

fees for the training/study ☐

neither ☐

other ☐

16) With whom did you undertake your professional traineeship?

17) Please list your current membership of any professional bodies.

## CURRENT WORKING PRACTICES

This section covers working hours, patterns of working such as part time, flexi time, reasons for changing working hours. Where applicable, there are also questions on childcare and other caring commitments.

18) *This question examines differing forms of job tenure across the profession. Please provide details on both your main job and any other freelance, short term positions within accountancy that you might undertake.*

Is your current contract for a:

*main job*

*other 1*

*other 2*

permanent position

☐☐☐

|               |                          |                          |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| short term    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| fixed term    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| self employed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19) How many hours (on average) do you work per week?

20) There are numerous variations in working arrangements, please tick your current working arrangement AND any others on which you might have been employed:

|                                                          | currently                | previously               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| full time (30 hours+)<br><i>(go to question 23)</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| part time (up to 30 hours)<br><i>(go to question 21)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| term time only<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| annualised hours<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| zero hours contract<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| job share<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(go to question 21)*

21) How long have you been working on this current basis?  months

22) People who work hours other than full time do so for a variety of reasons. Please tick ANY that apply to you:

childcare ☐

|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| other family caring          | <input type="text"/> |
| other employment             | <input type="text"/> |
| training/study               | <input type="text"/> |
| own health                   | <input type="text"/> |
| other person's health        | <input type="text"/> |
| other non work activities    | <input type="text"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="text"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

23) Do you have any children?

|     |                                                 |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------|
| yes | <input type="text"/>                            |
| no  | <input type="text"/> (please go to question 26) |

The following two questions are looking at issues of childcare. Childcare remains the main reason for changes to working hours. National and European employment policies as well as some employers' in-house policies are attempting to reconcile the commitments of those with childcare responsibilities. The following questions aim to elicit information on the methods adopted to balance childcare and work commitments.

24) Please indicate how many children you have in each of the following age groups:

|               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 0 – 35 months | <input type="text"/> |
| 3 – 8 years   | <input type="text"/> |
| 9 – 11 years  | <input type="text"/> |
| 12 – 16 years | <input type="text"/> |



- 25) Please list which (if any) forms of childcare you are currently using, and have used at any time in the last 10 years.

|                              | currently                | have used                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| childminder                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| nursery                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| school nursery               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| au pair/nanny                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| friend/family                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| after school club            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

- 26) Within the next 5 years, do you envisage changing your current working hours?

|     |                                                   |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------|
| yes | <input type="checkbox"/>                          |
| no  | <input type="checkbox"/> please go to question 29 |

- 27) Will your hours:

|          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| increase | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| decrease | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 28) Please could you outline why you envisage making changes to your hours:

## ABOUT YOURSELF

The next 6 questions will provide the research with a detailed level of information on the characteristics of all respondents.

29)      male      ☐      female      ☐

|     |     |  |
|-----|-----|--|
| 30) | Age |  |
|-----|-----|--|

31) Household composition. Does your household comprise:

single person

two person household ☐

multiple adult household (non family members)

single adult with children ☐

two adults with children ☐

other family members ☐

other composition,   
please describe below

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

32) How would you describe your marital status?

single ☐

married ☐

living as couple ☐

divorced/separated ☐

widowed ☐

other 

33) How would you describe your ethnic origin?

|                 |                          |             |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| White           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Indian      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Irish           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pakistani   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black African   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black other     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

34) Do you consider yourself to have a disability that limits your everyday activities?

yes ☐ please specify, (optional):

-----

no ☐ --

This questionnaire forms the first stage of Ph.D. fieldwork into non-standard working practices within the professions. If you would be willing to take part in a further interview on this subject, please complete the details below. If you would like further information on this study, please either contact me, or my doctorate supervisor, Professor Sue Yeandle, at Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Pond Street, Sheffield.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**

## Appendix 4

### Questionnaire - Main Stage Architecture

This questionnaire forms part of a Ph.D. study into changing working practices within the architecture profession. It has been designed in agreement with the Sheffield RIBA District Society and the national RIBA Architects for Change group. All information provided shall be treated in strict confidence and has been circulated by the district society. All information provided shall be treated in confidence.

#### ABOUT YOUR JOB

This section of the questionnaire is intended to gather information about your current and previous positions within architecture, including information on your areas of expertise.

1) What is your current position within your organisation? (job title)

2) How long have you held this position? (in months)

Months in this practice

3) Could you list all other positions you've previously held within architecture, (including those in other organisations).  
**(please indicate with an asterisk, those positions held during your training period)**

|  | Job title | Length<br>(in months) |
|--|-----------|-----------------------|
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |
|  |           |                       |

4) Are you currently:

employed ☐

self employed ☐

both ☐

5) Do you work mainly in the: all three – anything legal considered

public sector ☐

private sector ☐

other (e.g. voluntary sector) ☐

6) Is your organisation:  
small, employing under 100 staff ☐

medium, employing 100 – 400 staff ☐

large, employing 400+ staff ☐

7) What is your specific area of expertise (e.g. environmental design)?

8) Please list your main responsibilities (including line management and training responsibilities).

## TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

This section looks at qualifications, both professional and academic as well as current training. It aims to provide the research with an overview of the spectrum of qualifications within the architecture profession as well as an understanding of the extent of in work training being undertaken.

9) Please indicate your highest **academic** qualification:

*NVQ/BTEC/City and Guilds or equivalent* ☐

*A' Level or equivalent* ☐

*Degree* ☐

*Post graduate qualifications, PG. Dip, MA/MSc etc* ☐

*Scottish SCE Standard 1,2,3* ☐

*Scottish SCE ordinary passes or grades a,b,c* ☐

*Scottish SCE/SLC/SUPE highers* ☐

*Other qualifications, (please write in)*  
*\_\_ Various short training and CPD courses\_\_*  
-----  
-----  
-----

10) Please list your professional qualifications. BA Dip Arch RIBA

11) Please list those qualifications, specified by your employer, as essential for your current position.

12) Are you currently undertaking training?  
no ☐ please go to question 16  
yes ☐ please go to question 13

13) Please list the training currently being undertaken, including the qualification(s) to be achieved, (where appropriate).

14) Is this training undertaken:

during working hours ☐

outside working hours ☐

both ☐

15) Does your employer provide: (multiple responses possible)

study time ☐

fees for the training/study ☐

neither ☐

other ☐

16) With whom did you undertake your professional traineeship?

17) Please list your current membership of any professional bodies.

#### CURRENT WORKING PRACTICES

This section covers working hours, patterns of working such as part time, flexi time, reasons for changing working hours. Where applicable, there are also questions on childcare and other caring commitments.

18) *This question examines differing forms of job tenure across the profession. Please provide details on both your main job and any other freelance, short term positions within architecture that you might undertake.*

Is your current contract for a:

|                    | <i>main job</i>          | <i>other 1</i>           | <i>other 2</i>           |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| permanent position | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| short term         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| fixed term         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|               |                          |                          |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| self employed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19) How many hours (on average) do you work per week

20) There are numerous variations to working arrangements, please tick your current working arrangement AND any others on which you might have been employed:

|                                                          | currently                | previously               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| full time (30 hours+)<br><i>(go to question 23)</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| part time (up to 30 hours)<br><i>(go to question 21)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| term time only<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| annualised hours<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| zero hours contract<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| job share<br><i>(go to question 21)</i>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other: -----  
*(go to question 21)*

21) How long have you been working on this current basis?  months

22) People who work hours other than full time do so for a variety of reasons. Please tick ANY that apply to you:

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other family caring | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other employment    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| training/study      | <input type="checkbox"/> |



|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
|                              | _____                |
| own health                   | <input type="text"/> |
| other person's health        | <input type="text"/> |
| other non work activities    | <input type="text"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="text"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

23) Do you have any children?

|     |                                                 |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------|
| yes | <input type="text"/>                            |
| no  | <input type="text"/> (please go to question 26) |

The following two questions are looking at issues of childcare. Childcare remains the main reason for changes to working hours. National and European employment policies as well as some employers' in-house policies are attempting to reconcile the commitments of those with childcare responsibilities. The following questions aim to elicit information on the methods adopted to balance childcare and work commitments.

24) Please indicate the numbers and ages of your children:

|               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 0 – 35 months | <input type="text"/> |
| 3 – 8 years   | <input type="text"/> |
| 9 – 11 years  | <input type="text"/> |
| 12 – 16 years | <input type="text"/> |

25) Please list which (if any) forms of childcare you are currently using, and have used at any time in the last 10 years.

|                |                      |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                | currently            | have used            |
| childminder    | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| nursery        | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| school nursery | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

|                              |                          |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| au pair/nanny                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| friend/family                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| after school club            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

26) Within the next 5 years, do you envisage changing your current working hours?

yes ☐

no ☐ please go to question 29

27) Will your hours:.

increase ☐

decrease ☐

28) Please could you outline why you envisage making changes to your hours:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT YOURSELF

The next 6 questions will provide the research with a detailed level of information on the characteristics of all respondents.

29) male ☐ female ☐

30) Age ☐

31) Household composition, does your household comprise:

single person ☐

two person household

multiple adult household  
(non family members)

single adult with children

two adults with children

other family members

other composition,  
please describe below

-----

--

-----

--

32) How would you describe your marital status?

single

married

living as couple

divorced/separated

widowed

other

33) How would you describe your ethnic origin?

White  Indian

Irish  Pakistani

Black African  Bangladeshi

Black Caribbean  Asian other

Black other

☐

Other

☐

34) Do you consider yourself to have a disability that limits your everyday activities?

yes ☐ please specify, optional:

-----

no

☐

--

This questionnaire forms the first stage of Ph.D. fieldwork into non-standard working practices within the professions. If you would be willing to take part in a further interview on this subject, please complete the details below. If you would like further information on this study, please either contact me, or my doctorate supervisor, Professor Sue Yeandle, at Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Pond Street, Sheffield.

Name: -----

Address: -----  
-----

Daytime Telephone No. -----

Email address -----

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**

## **Appendix 5**

### **Interview Topic Guide**

*Outline research and go through and check interviewee's details from questionnaire. Explain confidentiality, highlighting that all information is anonymised and that interviewees can choose not to answer a question if preferred.*

#### **Current job and Career Development**

To start with, could you outline your career development, starting perhaps with your post 18 education, (check that training period is included, get years if possible).

From the questionnaire, your current job title is listed as xxxxxxxx, could you perhaps outline more fully what this position entails and your main roles and responsibilities?

You've been in your current position for xxx months/years (insert from questionnaire). Has your job remit changed at all during this time?

If so, how? *(note: re-grades to job remit or content or promotion)*

Looking in detail at your current position, what were the key factors within this job that lead you to apply for the position?

Were there factors, other than those discussed above, that contributed to your choice of current job?

Do you have any plans to move from your current position within the next 5 years?

If yes, why?

Will this move be within, or from, your current organisation?

#### **Professional Development and the role of Professional Bodies**

Could you list those factors that you perceive as most important to your career development and progression? Within work place move from qu

Are there factors that might hinder progression? Why might these hinder?

You've listed membership to xxx and xxx. How important is membership to these bodies to you and your career? Is it important to your organisation?

What does membership to these bodies mean to you? *What I'm trying to establish here, is the role that membership to organisations such as RIBA plays in professional development.*

What involvement, if any, do you have with the local, regional and national levels of (RIBA, ARB etc)? What roles do you think these bodies should play within the profession?

Do they currently play these roles?

Training and development (*ask either of following sets of questions dependent upon responses to current level of training in questionnaire*)

**Either:** In your questionnaire, you listed that you were currently undertaking training. How long have you been undertaking this training?

Did you recommend this training to your employer or was it a recommendation from within your organisation? Have you looked for specific training opportunities

How important is this training to your career development?

Do you receive any support from your organisation?

Is this support enough?

If no, what support would you like to receive?

Are there specific areas of training or continued professional development that you would like to undertaken and are not currently?

If yes, please outline.

How important to you, and your career, is training and CPD?

**Or:** In your questionnaire, you listed that you were not currently undertaking training.

Do you have any plans to undertake training within the next 12 months?

How important is training to your career development? Does your organisation support training?

If no, do you think it should? If yes, what sorts of support are offered?

Are there specific areas of training or continued professional development that you would like to undertake and are not currently?

If yes, please outline.

How important to you, and your career, is training and CPD?

## **Working Practices**

I see from your questionnaire that you are currently working full time / part time / term hours. Are there particular reasons why you choose to work these hours?

Has your tenure (i.e. full time or part time) changed over the past 5 years?

If yes, why did it change?

Over all, since joining the profession have you noticed any changes in working practices? (This can be personally or generally across the profession).

Do you perceive these changes to be for the better or worse? Why do you say that?

The past 10 years have witnessed an increase in non-standard working practices. By non-standard, I mean part time, term only, flexi time, and job share.

Do you / have you considered working in any of these ways? If yes, which practices would you wish to adopt / currently practice?

Does your organisation operate any non-standard working practices?

Does it make clear that such options are available?

Do you think that your organisation should operate non-standard working practices? Why do you say that?

Do you consider that NS working practices have any impact on career development and job progression?

Have you experienced this? Are you aware of anyone within your profession who has?

How do your colleagues react to those working non-standard hours?

What role, if any, do clients' needs and expectations play in decisions about your working practices?

What support does the architecture profession give to different forms of working?

Are you aware of any involvement by professional bodies in supporting non-standard working within architecture?

### **Hours Worked**

You listed in your questionnaire that, on average, you work xx hours per week? Does this vary from week to week? If yes, by how much?

Does your organisation record all hours worked by their employees? Do you ever under record hours worked? How are these records kept/recorded?

If yes, why do you do that?

What changes have you experienced to working hours over the last 5 years?

- a) personally, and
- b) across the architecture profession?

Why do you think that such changes have occurred?

Looking to the future, what impact do you think that non-standard working practices and changes in working hours will have on your career? Why do you say that?

What impact do you think they'll have on the architecture profession? Why do you say that?

Thank interviewee and outline next stage of research (that the interview will be written up and forwarded to respondent so that details esp. career history can be checked).

In your questionnaire, you listed that you were currently undertaking training. How long have you been undertaking this training?

Did you recommend this training to your employer or was it a recommendation from within your organisation?



How important is this training to your career development?

What support do you receive from your organisation?

Is this support enough?

If no, what support would you like to receive?

Are there specific areas of training or continued professional development that you would like to undertaken and are not currently?

If yes, please outline.

How important to you, and your career, is training and CPD?

**Thank, explain how information will be used, repeat confidential nature of data and close**

## Appendix 6

### Key characteristics of those survey respondents who participated in follow-up, in-depth interviews

| No. | Sex    | Age Group | Profession | Working Pattern*               | Children                |
|-----|--------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1.  | Female | Mid 40s   | Architect  | Self employed, full time       | 2, secondary school age |
| 2.  | Female | Late 40s  | Architect  | Full time                      | 2, secondary school age |
| 3.  | Male   | Early 30s | Architect  | Full time                      | None                    |
| 4.  | Male   | Mid 30s   | Architect  | Full time, moving to part time | 2, under 3              |
| 5.  | Female | Mid 40s   | Architect  | Full time                      | 2, secondary school age |
| 6.  | Female | Early 30s | Accountant | Self employed, full time       | None                    |
| 7.  | Female | Late 20s  | Accountant | Flexible hours                 | 2, under 6              |
| 8.  | Female | Late 20s  | Accountant | Part time                      | 1, under 5              |
| 9.  | Male   | Early 30s | Architect  | Full time                      | None                    |
| 10  | Male   | Mid 30s   | Accountant | Full time                      | None                    |
| 11  | Female | Mid 20s   | Architect  | Full time, moving to part time | None                    |
| 12  | Female | Mid 50s   | Architect  | Full time                      | 2, adult                |
| 13  | Female | Late 20s  | Accountant | Flexible hours                 | 2, under 3              |
| 14  | Female | Early 40s | Accountant | Part time                      | 3, under 11             |
| 15  | Male   | Mid 50s   | Architect  | Full time                      | 2, adult                |
| 16  | Female | Mid 40s   | Architect  | Part time                      | 2, under 11             |

|    |        |           |            |                          |             |
|----|--------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| 17 | Female | Early 30s | Accountant | Part time                | 2, under 6  |
| 18 | Female | Mid 30s   | Accountant | Part time                | 1, under 5  |
| 19 | Male   | Mid 30s   | Accountant | Full time                | 1, under 5  |
| 20 | Female | Mid 40s   | Accountant | Full time                | 3, under 5  |
| 21 | Male   | Mid 40s   | Architect  | Self employed, full time | 2, under 11 |
| 22 | Female | Late 20s  | Accountant | Full time                | 1, under 5  |
| 23 | Male   | Early 40s | Accountant | Self employed, full time | 1, under 5  |
| 24 | Female | Mid 30s   | Architect  | Portfolio working        | 1, under 5  |
| 25 | Female | Early 30s | Accountant | Full time                | None        |
| 26 | Female | Mid 20s   | Architect  | Full time                | None        |
| 27 | Male   | Late 50s  | Architect  | Full time                | 3, adult    |
| 28 | Male   | Mid 50s   | Architect  | Full time                | 2, adult    |
| 29 | Male   | Late 20s  | Architect  | Full time                | None        |
| 30 | Female | Mid 40s   | Architect  | Full time                | None        |
| 31 | Female | Late 40s  | Architect  | Full time                | 2, under 11 |
| 32 | Female | Early 40s | Architect  | Part time                | 2, under 11 |

\*Those who working pattern was 'full-time' were included in this study because they had indicated that they were considering moves to non-standard working hours, or had previously had a non-standard working pattern.

## Appendix 7 – time deviance, an audit trail of its analysis

An early literature review of working practices within the professions (Epstein et al, 1999, Mennino, 2002) highlighted how, within some organisations, non-standard working is viewed as a form of 'time deviance'.

From these readings, I developed a very simple theoretical structure of the development of notions of time deviance:

- 1) Non-standard working → non-standard relative to the full time model of employment → therefore non-standard is viewed as 'other' or 'deviant'.
- 2) What is 'standard employment'? → Standard is full time, work first employment → traditionally 'male' models of employment. Family friendly practices are inextricably tied up with women workers, through a general understanding of women remaining the primary carers and caregivers within a family structure.
- 3) How is it described in the literature? → *"As long as taking up family friendly policies is an individual option, the employee risks becoming a 'time deviant' (Epstein et al 1999) and thus marginalised."* (Brandth and Kvande 2001: 265).
- 4) Is this highlighted in any of my Gatekeeper interviews? → *"I guess the element that we don't see is that there's something about firms and the senior people within firms talking about work life balance and saying, it's here if you want it, and the other side. People taking responsibility for their own work life practices. Because at the end of the day there isn't anyone standing over them saying, 'Where the hell do you think you're going?' it's not that kind of culture. But when you ask people why they*

*don't take responsibility, it's because they don't want to be thought of badly."* Human resources manager, large multinational firm.

- 5) Do respondents have perceptions of time deviance? Do they view their working practices as deviant? I found two approaches: one adopted by a male architect who was seemingly justifying his non-standard working practices on the basis that, although he wasn't full time in the office, he could remain in contact through remote IT systems and the 'phone.

*"I take my laptop home and I can plug in and access all the emails and talk to people on the telephone, and just because I'm not physically strapped to a table upstairs, that's not a problem and the fact that I'm not in the office but am at home, I could be out of the office at a meeting for another job so people who have an urgent message or have something they want dealt with urgently, then I'm contactable. You can just plug your laptop in at home and you're away."* (Male architect, mid thirties, moving to part time hours, two children under two years old).

A second respondent, female in this case, saw less need to justify her working practices, arguing that it's a matter of working effectively when in the office.

*"You work better if you're more organised and I think one of women's abilities, particularly if they've got families, is that they do, they're working hard, and they do organise their time very well. Lots of lads will spread it out because they're working till 8 every night. In the end, they're doing the same job, they go round about at it differently."* (Female architect, mid forties, works full time, self employed, two junior school age children).

6) I reviewed the other transcripts and questionnaires to highlight references to working practices. I was interested, was this something that was specific to gender or to size of practice? I then cross referred to existing literature, looking at ways in which 'time deviance' was identified in other readings relating to other professions. I reached the following conclusions:

- There was not a clear cut difference depending upon gender. Nor were there clear differences by size of firm. Female respondents were seemingly more accepting of a slight hiatus in their career progression due to moves to non-standard hours whilst male respondents were more negative about their future career prospects following such a move. For example; moving to part time hours signalled 'a nose dive' in the career prospects for one architect with a young family.
- A conclusion was thus that values concerning 'committed' professionals are still dominated by a belief in a long hours, macho culture of working. Those who adopt non-standard working practices, however much they value their working arrangements and reinforce the positive contributions such practices make to their working lives and home lives, still view themselves as 'other' when compared with their full time employed colleagues. This perception of being the 'other' was, however, accepted to some degree by both the male and female respondents. They voiced concern about the impacts on their careers but also stated that their careers would 'improve' when they returned to full time work.

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